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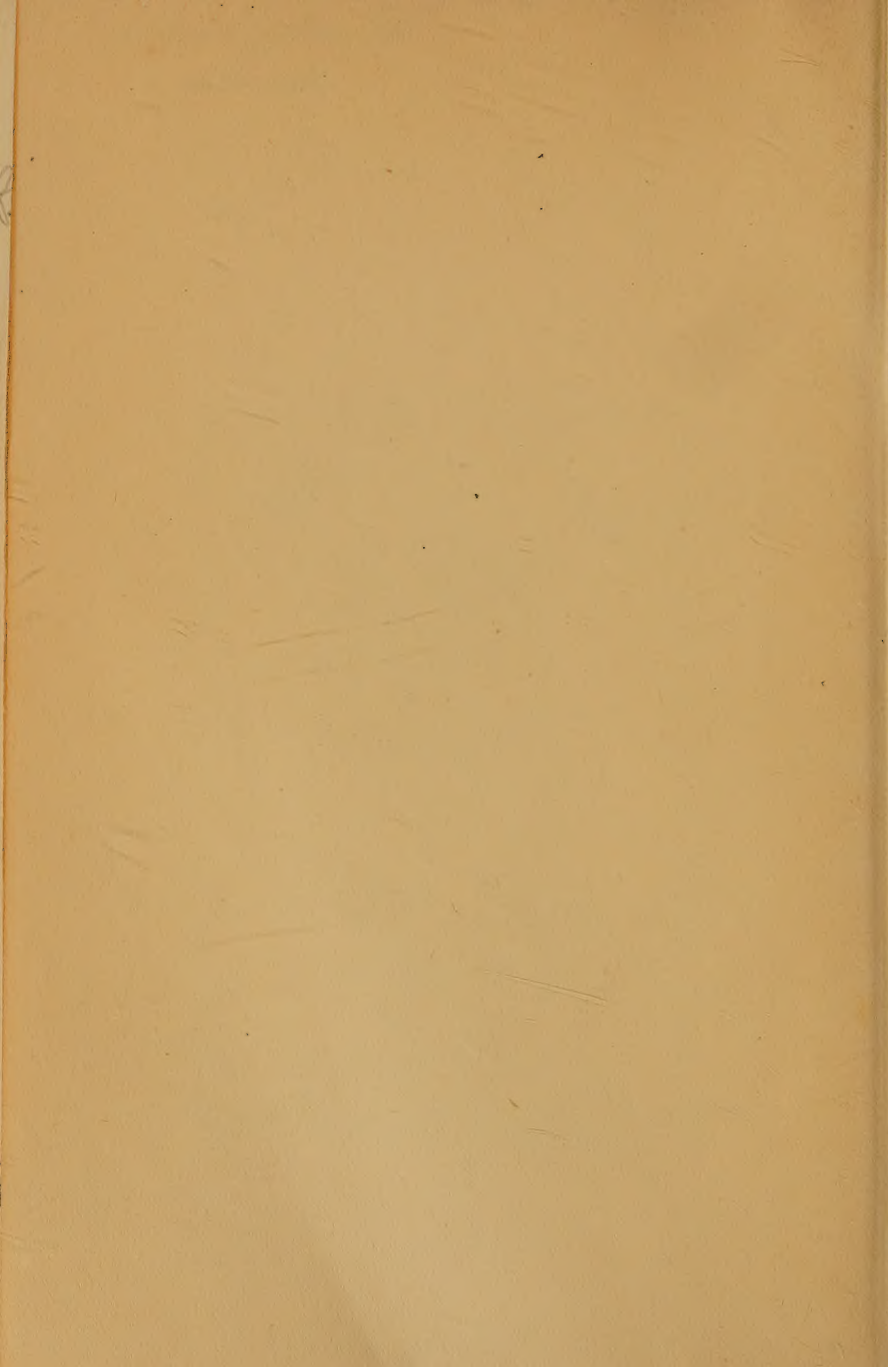
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THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE

BY

H. L. GOUDGE, D.D.

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EDITORIAL FOREWORD

A FEW words seem desirable to explain the publication of a series of books, some of which may appear to differ widely in character from others, under the common title of the Anglican Library of Faith and Thought. The general intention is to offer a systematic treatment of some of the facts of religious experience and history, in such a manner as to illustrate the principles involved or implied in them. The authors invited to contribute to this series are men of thought, who would all attach a high value to the historical continuity and intellectual tradition of the Christian Church, but are at the same time fully conscious of the need for independent judgment and for sympathetic understanding of modern problems and processes. The books are not technical handbooks, but aim at presenting facts intelligently to the educated public, without any sacrifice of interest and attractiveness.

It should be said that the original suggestion of the series was made by the Literature Committee of the English Church Union, a body of some fifty well-known scholars of the Anglican Communion. But the Union assumes no responsibility for any more than the projection of the series and the appointment, jointly with Messrs. Longmans, Green and Co., of the Editor. Detailed responsibility rests entirely with the several authors, subject only to the Editor's general oversight ; and that oversight has been exercised of set purpose with a view to the production of works which in the Editor's judgment are of value in tending to promote clear thought upon important subjects, rather than with a

view to obtaining finality of statement upon matters in which a claim to finality might possibly savour of intellectual presumption.

The Editor ventures to express the hope that when its purpose is understood in this sense the series may prove of real value in a generation which from its various circumstances both needs and demands clear and serious thinking about the fundamental concerns of religion.

G.L.P.

PREFACE

It is always dangerous to interfere in a quarrel. But sometimes those at variance are both so dear to us that the inconvenience of being belaboured by both must be accepted. Now the quarrel between the historical critic and the Fundamentalist is an example of this. The Fundamentalist has a profound confidence in Scripture, based, not merely upon the traditional teaching of the Church, but upon his experience of Scripture itself. He feels sure that no alleged facts to its discredit can be real facts ; they will be disproved in time, and it does not seem to him worth while to trouble himself about them. The historical critic, on the other hand, knowing that in view of modern knowledge Fundamentalism cannot stand, too often regards it with contempt. Often he knows little of the depth of meaning found in Scripture by the students of the past, or of its present value for those who read it as the Word of God. Thus each side regards the other as ignorant, and not without justice. The truth is that the human mind is limited ; and, though the knowledge available is continually growing, our capacity for its assimilation is not. A generation which has been absorbed in one kind of study has forgotten a great deal which earlier generations knew, and for the moment the loss may be greater than the gain. Let us observe two indisputable facts. Since the beginning of the last quarter of the nineteenth century a greater advance has been made in the critical and historical knowledge of the Old Testament than in all earlier centuries together. During the same period

regard for the Old Testament has among devout Christians steadily declined. Naturally the Fundamentalist sees a close connection between these two facts. Yet in England critical scholars have been neither reckless nor indevout; they have tried to reassure "the simple believer," and show him that the new knowledge possesses a spiritual value of its own.

Now the present writer is not an Old Testament scholar. But he has one advantage. Though he is convinced that the critics are substantially right, he was brought up to read the Bible in the Fundamentalist way. If the cross-bench argument here presented appears but an ingenious *tour de force*, he would plead that the modern account of the Bible is too simple, and that the complicated lock needs a more complicated key. In the Bible, we believe, there is a divine element, as well as a human, though it requires faith for its discernment. If the historical critic recognizes this insufficiently, the experience of the Fundamentalist is not explained. Once more, if this little book is lacking in unity, and seems to resemble a medieval work "*De omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*," its writer would plead that his main purpose is to exhibit the value of the Bible in many different ways, and especially in its bearing upon present controversies.

CHRIST CHURCH,
December, 1929.

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CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE

THERE can hardly be a stranger contrast than that often drawn between the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of the Church. It was the Word of God, of which the Bible is the record, which created the Church ; and by that Word the Church has ever lived. It was the Church which gradually formed the Bible ; it was written by her members and for her members, and apart from the Church's life it cannot rightly be understood. The Church and the Bible have grown, and lived, and worked, and suffered together ; not only are they the two great witnesses to God as revealed in Christ, but powerful witnesses the one to the other.

Now we see this first before the coming of the Lord. To the Jews of our Lord's day any separation of the two would have been inconceivable. The Old Testament witnessed to the divine calling of Israel, the Church of God, while Israel in its turn witnessed to the Old Testament. It was by the Church that the great collections of the Law, the Prophets, and the " Sacred Writings " were gradually formed and marked off from other books, and it was largely through the translation and use of the Scriptures by the Jews of the Dispersion that Israel's witness was borne to the world.

So it was when the Lord had come. Still it was the Word of God which created and sustained the Church ; still it was the Church which produced the Scriptures and marked them off from other writings ; and still it was practically impossible to accept the Church without accepting the Scriptures, or the Scriptures without

1 Pet. 1²³, 25

accepting the Church. Their mutual witness has been compared to that of an ambassador and his credentials. But this comparison hardly does them justice; a *soi-disant* ambassador may be an impostor, and his credentials be forged. The character of the Church does not rest only upon the witness of the Bible, or the character of the Bible only upon the witness of the Church. The Church witnesses to God and attracts men to her fellowship, while as yet they know little of the Bible; and the Bible witnesses to God and impresses men with its divine character, while as yet they know little of the Church. The two support one another like the sides of an arch. Each rests upon firm ground of its own, but each is immeasurably strengthened by the presence of the other.

We see then the union of the Church and the Bible as it was in the beginning, and as it is coming to be again. But this intimate union does not everywhere exist. If of many Protestants it may with truth be said that "the Bible and the Bible only" is their religion, of many Catholics it may be said with equal truth that the Church and the Church only is their religion. What God has joined together man puts asunder. Catholics often recognize in practice no more authority in the Bible to correct their teaching than Protestants recognize in the Church. But we must not blame either without recognizing how the divorce has been brought about. The Church of the Fathers, like the Church of later days, did not send men to the Bible to find a religion for themselves; it was for "the Church to teach and the Bible to prove." But this in no way led it to disparage the Bible, or to withhold it from the laity. The Fathers generally thought of the Bible much as our grandparents thought, and were at one with the Church of England in her watchword of "the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation."

They were themselves profoundly versed in Scripture ; St. Gregory the Great seems as much at home in Leviticus as a modern Christian in the Gospel of St. John, and their sermons largely consist of expositions of Scripture verse by verse. But, though their appeal to Scripture is constant, it is far from being always enlightened. Much of Hebrew thought and of the historical background of the Old Testament was misunderstood by the Early Christians, and this weakened their understanding of the New Testament also. Thus, though the Fathers would have wished every Christian to read and understand the Bible, there were almost from the first difficulties in the way.

But the situation soon became worse. The Church after Constantine had to deal, as we have, with a multitude of merely nominal Christians, disposed neither to read the Bible for themselves nor to attend to its exposition by others ; and soon the barbarian invasions made wide acquaintance with the Bible impossible. The lay people were ignorant of it, not because they were forbidden to read it, but because they read nothing at all ; and, if the Church taught the barbarians as we teach children, it was because it was the only way. The popular ignorance of Scripture in the Dark and Middle Ages may be exaggerated ; not all countries were as badly off as England for vernacular translations. But this ignorance was great, and its results deplorable. No man, and no body of men, can be trusted to wield without appeal such authority as the Church in those ages wielded ; and the loss of the power to test her teaching by Scripture wrought untold evil, doctrinal and practical. Thus, when the Bible came once more to be widely read, the shock was almost as severe as that produced by the Law in Josiah's reign. 2 Kings 22^{8ff}

Now it was thus that the supposed contrast arose between the teaching of the Bible and that of the Church,

and we should do justice both to the Church and to her opponents. That a full and frank appeal to the teaching of Scripture, even against the Church, is right and necessary will be argued immediately ; to appeal to it only " as the Church interprets it " is not to appeal to it at all. But that is only a part of the truth. Not only could not the Church be expected to make a sudden revolution in its methods, but it was not desirable that it should. The recovery of the Bible was one thing, the recovery of its true meaning another, and, where the meaning put upon it is profoundly mistaken, the Bible is no longer the Word of God. Not only did the Reformers no more understand Hebrew thought than their opponents, but they often misunderstood it in a more disastrous way. What was needed was the careful study of Scripture by such men as Colet and Erasmus, and reformation based upon its clearly established results. What the Church had actually to face was something very different. First, there was the baseless idea that anybody, however ignorant, could discover for himself the meaning of Scripture ; and, secondly, there was the fact that the open Bible was the weapon not only of true religious reformers, but of wild revolutionaries also. If the neglect of the Bible brought grave evils, its sudden recovery also brought grave evils. The attitude of the Roman Church to the " open Bible " has often been a matter of just reproach to it ; but it has not been chiefly due to fear of the truth. Between the best teaching of the Bible and the best teaching of the Church there is no contrast. But there was in the sixteenth century a real contrast both between the teaching of the Bible and the popular medieval teaching, and between the authoritative teaching of the Church and the teaching which the fanatics and revolutionaries of the time claimed to have derived from the Bible.

Now it is the character and mutual relations of these two great witnesses to God that it is the purpose of this book to explain, and the time is ripe for doing so. If the Roman Church to-day is still suspicious of the open Bible, it is less so than it was, and there is hope that soon it will not be so at all. If Protestants still fail to do justice to the place of the Church in the divine purpose, they do far more justice to it than once they did ; in England some Protestant Nonconformists have a better right to the name of High-Churchmen than most members of the Established Church. But the old blunders and suspicions have not yet passed away ; and though the Church of England, the " Bridge-Church," ought to do impartial justice both to the Church and to the Bible, it does not yet do it. Our more Protestant members still have a most inadequate idea of the place of the Church, and our more Catholic members of the place of the Bible ; while both alike too often fail to grasp the greatness of the help which modern knowledge gives towards a true understanding of both.

What then may we rightly expect from these two great witnesses ? There are here important considerations which we should have before our minds.

In the first place, our desire for a purely intellectual certainty in the things of God is a desire which cannot be gratified under the conditions of our present life. God indeed is Eternal Truth ; Jesus Christ His Son is " the Amen, the faithful and true witness " ; the Holy Spirit is " the Spirit of truth," whose work it is to lead us " into all the truth " contained in the Lord's Person and Work. But God deals with us through men, whether He speaks in the Church or in the Bible ; and human imperfection and sin interfere with His working. A Church composed of men cannot be an infallible Church, nor can a book written by men be an infallible

Rev. 3¹⁴

John 14¹⁷

book. Of course, if God employed men simply as mechanical instruments, the difficulty might be overcome; the Holy Spirit might control the speech-centres of His mouthpieces, or the fingers of His amanuenses. But even then we should have to interpret what was written, and we should not do so infallibly unless we were ourselves infallible. In fact, however, God deals with us as men and not as mechanisms; as the Epistle to Diognetus says, force is no method of God's; He no more forces the mind into truth than the will into obedience. Though His grace knows no limit except our capacity and willingness to receive and to use it, that exception is a very real one; and no promise that our Lord makes can override the great law of which He warns us: "The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

Now it is strange that, though when we think of the individual Christian we are aware of this, we forget it when we turn to our chosen authority, the Bible or the Church. We treat the Church as if it were Jesus Christ, or the Bible as if it were the Holy Spirit. It was this kind of blunder that was in part responsible for the attitude of the Jews to the Lord. They could not endure that, instead of glorifying and aggrandizing the Church as He found it, He should denounce it, judge it, and look beyond it; He was a Samaritan if He did that. Nor could they endure that, instead of upholding the law as God's perfect and final word to His people, He should extend it, correct it, and look to the time when it would pass away. No doubt the Lord exalted both the Scriptures and the Church in their appointed places. He quoted the Scriptures frequently and with reverence; He claimed that they testified of Him. He said to the

Epistle ad
Diogn. 7

Matt. 6²²⁻²³

John 8⁴⁸

John 9²⁸⁻²⁹

Luke 16¹⁶

John 5³⁹

future leaders and guides of His Church, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." But He never placed either the Bible or the Church upon His own level of authority. Neither the Church nor the Bible are reliable teachers, except in so far as the Spirit of Christ has free course in them ; and, though their teaching is of immeasurable value, we can never be certain that the limitations and imperfections of the messengers do not in some measure obscure the truth which they declare. The mystery of God's grace is a very deep one, and the great teachers of the Church have been far from perfect agreement about it. Not only Calvin but St. Augustine taught a doctrine of grace which makes it magical and not moral ; according to their teaching, God does in fact force the mind into truth and the will into obedience. But such teaching has always been repudiated in Eastern Christendom, and generally in Western also. God respects the personality that He has given to us ; we can refuse His grace if we will. But, if we believe this in the case of the individual, we must believe it in the case of the Church and of the Bible ; we cannot, if we have any regard for logic, be Molinists when we speak of the individual, and Augustinians elsewhere. In the case of the Church this is specially important. Ideally it is as infallible as the Holy Spirit Himself ; were there perfect receptivity, there would be perfect knowledge. But the actual Church with which we have to do is not the Church as it might be, but the Church as it is, and that is a very different thing.

In the second place, though neither the Bible nor the Church is infallible, they wonderfully supplement one another. Each is strong where the other is weak, and, if we give heed to both, we may hope to reach "moral" certainty about all that here we need to know. Nowhere but in religion are we so foolish as to maintain that,

unless there is infallible authority, there can be no authority at all. Nothing can be absolutely certain but what is self-evident, and neither the facts of history nor the truths of science are ever that. But in almost every subject there is a mass of knowledge within our reach which is sufficiently certain to make it not only foolish but wicked to disregard it: and, though our beliefs are all theoretically subject to correction, we are practically certain that many of them will never need it. Our Lord teaches that growth in spiritual knowledge depends upon faithfulness to the light already given. Nothing can be better for us than to find that our confidence grows as we open our eyes to all available sources of light, and attain more fully "the single eye" which enables us to profit by them.

Matt. 13¹⁰⁻¹²

We consider first the witness of the Church. Always it is the Church which is our first and generally our most influential teacher. Long before we can read the Bible, we are influenced by the Church in the atmosphere of our Christian homes, in the witness borne by her worship and activity, and in the simple instruction which we receive from her members. When the time comes for us to hear and to read the Bible, it is the Church's life and the explanations given to us which enable us to understand it; and our early impressions abide with us to the end. Even those who lay the greatest stress upon independent study of the Bible seldom escape the influence of their early surroundings. It is by personal influence that the faith makes its conquests; one torch kindles another. The Apostles, believing that the Lord would soon return, had no thought of a New Testament. It was for them to guard and spread the faith while they lived, and for their successors when they had passed away. In the earliest ages it was "the rule of faith," the traditional teaching handed down in the Apostolic Churches, which was the

standard of Christian teaching, nor did the Apostles contemplate any other. We may rightly protest against "traditions" being put upon the level of Scripture, if we mean by traditions alleged truths which can claim no Scripture support; but "tradition"—the handing on of the truth by one to another—is the chief means by which truth reaches us.

But is this tradition all that is required? Not, except in the earliest days. The mind of man, which at first resists the Word of God, always tends to misunderstand, to impoverish, and to adulterate it after it has been received. Especially serious is this danger when mass-movements to the Church have taken place. It may be the office of "the rule of faith" to guard the truth, but what is then to guard the rule of faith? Old heathen errors enter the Church under a thin disguise;¹ the truth which "the natural man" fails to understand, the moral standards which he finds too exacting, are forgotten or repudiated; superstitions, at first tolerated by the Church in the hope of better things, become confused with the Church's faith, and have theological justifications provided for them. Widespread corruption destroys the spiritual eye, and the Church itself loses the power to recognize the moral and intellectual *débâcle* which has taken place.

1 Cor. 2¹⁴

Now it is here that the Bible is invaluable. When the Church falls, the Bible does not fall with it. *Littera scripta manet*. The words of the Bible—above all the picture of the Lord and His teaching, and the Apostolic witness—are what they are, and not even the Church can alter them. Christianity is the religion of a Person, not the religion of a book; but, if the book had not been provided, Christianity would long have ceased to be the religion of Christ. There is nothing more easy to lose than the true picture of the Lord. In all ages

¹ cf. Chap. vi, pp. 91, ff.

we are inclined to form an image of Him after our own desires, and worship the image that we have set up. In all ages we are anxious to capture the "goodwill" of Christianity for political or theological ventures of our own. It is the Bible—above all the New Testament—which stands in the way. It is not altogether pleasant to a Churchman to say these things, and they may easily be resented. "The appeal to antiquity," said Cardinal Manning, "is both a treason and a heresy. It is a treason because it rejects the Divine voice of the Church at this hour, and a heresy because it denies that voice to be Divine." But that the voice of the present Church can be identified with the voice of God is exactly what we are obliged to deny, and the more that Scripture is neglected the less divine it is sure to be.

We see then how the Church's witness, with its liability to corruption, finds its necessary complement in the changeless witness of the Bible. But now it is time to turn to the other side. For the Bible also has its weaknesses; and, just in so far as its readers try to depend upon it alone, and ignore the life and witness of the Church, they are sure to interpret the Bible itself in a false or fanatical way. The Bible was not written to provide a manual for self-instruction, and the attempt so to use it may be disastrous.

In the first place, the Bible, unlike the Koran, is a book with an extraordinary variety of contents, and it is hard to select the parts directly adapted to the moral and religious instruction of Christians. Much of it, taken in its surface meaning, is not very edifying; some, though but little, is the reverse. Frequently for its right understanding it requires a knowledge of the historical background, while its scientific outlook is for us impossible. No doubt, the nobler a literature, the less its value is affected by the passing of the years; and the Bible contains the noblest and most universal

literature of the world. But, while the Church can speak to us in our own language and forms of thought, the Bible cannot; read "without note or comment" it is often unintelligible. It is true that never has it been so easy to ascertain its meaning, if the best methods are employed, as it is to-day: far less than in any previous age is it a "nose of wax" which every one may twist as he pleases. The very fact that its expositors no longer always feel it necessary to accept its teaching makes them more ready to recognize what its teaching is. But the knowledge requisite for right interpretation is probably greater than in the case of any other book, and it is not easy for most people to acquire it.

Secondly, the Bible is the record of a progressive revelation, and so contains teaching of varying intellectual, moral, and religious levels; and experience shows that, unless we have already made the Christian standards our own, the Bible may lead us badly astray. The Old Testament is very much longer than the New, and its lower levels are more congenial to "the natural man" than the teaching of Christ and the Apostles. How largely the Church has overcome this difficulty and raised the Old Testament to the Christian level will be presently explained; we are thinking now of its *prima facie* meaning. At its lowest level the Bible gives to us not the truths of revelation, but precisely those conceptions of God and of human life from which it is the purpose of revelation to deliver us. It represents God as "the sultan of the universe," cruel, revengeful, and arbitrary. It regards the life of man as limited to this present world, there being nothing beyond but a shadowy existence unworthy of the name of life, and thus consistently regards the favour of God as shown in worldly prosperity. Indeed it is long before these conceptions are really banished; progress is slow and fitful, while even after progress has been made the

precepts regarded as divine are often unsuited for Christians.

Now history has shown that, when the light of God's Spirit burns low in the Church, these elements in the Bible are most dangerous. Let us take an example. Unless there is a grasp of the difference made by the gift of the Spirit, the "rough surgery" of the Old Testament will, in spite of the Lord's teaching, be taken as a precedent for Christian action. While the Church cannot yet overcome evil with good, it may be better to put to death idolaters and dealers with familiar spirits than to allow them to drag down the Church to the level of the world; and, when the Bible on its lower levels commands religious persecution and imposes the death penalty for witchcraft, there is nothing to shock our conscience in the fact. Yet how appalling have the results of such precepts been in Christian history! They are contrary to the teaching of Christ and of the Apostolic Church, and when first applied within the Church profoundly shocked such men as St. Martin of Tours. But they were in the Bible; the "simple Christian" who "simply receives what is simply said" felt bound to carry them out. "I deny," writes Cartwright, the great Puritan leader of Elizabeth's reign, "that upon repentance there ought to follow any pardon of death. . . . Heretics ought to be put to death now. If this be bloody and extreme, I am content to be so counted with the Holy Ghost." To those who love the Bible such facts as these are most unwelcome; they think that no Christian could suppose the Bible to justify such horrors as these. But why do they think this? Because, though in theory they may base their religion upon "the Bible only," they have never in fact done so. Their real teachers have been the Church, and the Bible read in the Christian atmosphere and understood more

or less as the Church has come to understand it.

Thirdly, the Bible as the book of the Church everywhere presupposes membership in the Church, acquaintance with her practice, and above all the corporate outlook upon religion and life. Suppose then that we read it as if it were a book just disinterred from some long-buried city of the East. The references to the doctrine and worship of the Church will hardly be intelligible, and even its ethics will be misunderstood. Almost every one for whom the Apostles and Evangelists wrote had not only already received the Church's catechetical instruction, but been a recipient of the Christian sacraments. Why should they repeat what all their readers knew, or explain references which not one of their hearers would be likely to miss? Why should St. Mark or St. Matthew, in giving the briefest possible account of the institution of the Eucharist, mention that our Lord commanded it to be repeated in remembrance of Him? We ourselves may have to explain to Indian or Japanese readers of our Gospels that the Eucharist is an abiding part of the Church's practice, while the feet-washing is not; but the original readers of the Gospels needed no such information. So again with the corporate outlook of the Bible. To one who grasps the calling of the Church and its unity in Christ, the Bible doctrine of election presents little difficulty. But the misunderstanding which is possible, if St. Paul's Epistles are read from an individualist standpoint, is appalling; it may lead to a view of the character of God in some ways lower than is found in any heathen religion. Or let us take an ethical example. The Sermon on the Mount is not addressed to the world; it is an instruction to our Lord's disciples as a body separate from the world. His precepts of non-resistance are to be taken with entire seriousness, and literally followed by the Church when the world attacks her.

Est. 9¹⁵⁻¹⁷

We are to meet the world's hostility as the Lord met it, and not as the Jews met it in the Book of Esther. But suppose that we read these precepts without any thought of the Church's relation to the world, what is the consequence? We find in them a condemnation not only of war, but of the simplest action of the police; so far from regarding the civil magistrate with his sword as "the minister of God for good," we must regard him as an emissary of Satan.

Rom. 13⁴2 Tim. 3¹⁴⁻¹⁶

We see then that, just as the Church is insufficient for our need without the Bible, so the Bible is insufficient without the Church. Can the truth be better expressed than as St. Paul expresses it? "Abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." There is the tradition of the Church, supported as it is by the character of those who have given it to us. But there is more than this. "And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness." Timothy has not been satisfied with tradition. He has studied the Scriptures also, which though they cannot, as the Jews had thought, themselves give eternal life, lead to Him in whom it is found. Nor does their utility end with this. They are great instruments for practical teaching, for convicting men of their errors and sins, for putting right what has gone wrong, for the building up of the Christian character. And St. Paul concludes by pointing out that, valuable as they are for all, they are specially so for "the man of God," who speaks for God to His people and to the world. Unless he is deep in Scripture he cannot be furnished for the varied activity demanded of him.

John 5³⁹

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CHAPTER II

THE WORD OF GOD

It has been shown how necessary the one to the other are the Church and the Bible. But it is as easy to "be puffed up for the one against the other" as it was for the Corinthians in dealing with St. Paul and Apollos. The remedy is to go behind both to a reality greater than either, the Word of God itself. In the past the Bible has often been itself identified with the Word of God. That identification is impossible, though it will appear later that it has more justification than is sometimes recognized. But the Bible is not only a record, but a noble witness to the nature and power of the Word of God; and it is to its teaching on this subject that we now turn. It forms an impressive unity, but is seldom understood. 1 Cor. 4⁶

We observe first that the Word of God, who is eternal Truth, is always the expression of the mind, and will, and purpose, indeed of the very being, of God Himself. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That is not only the doctrine of the New Testament, but of the Old also, though in the latter there is no thought yet of the Incarnate Word. This mind, and will, and purpose of God in all their "breadth and length and height and depth" we are as yet unable to grasp; and the Word of God as spoken to us, even by and in the Lord, does not go beyond our power to understand and respond to it. But in itself it is all that God is—"of one substance with the Father." That is the way in which the John 1¹ Eph. 3¹⁸

Ex. 23²⁰, 21 etc.

Hebrews thought of all that is divine—of God's Word, His Wisdom, His Spirit, His Glory, and of the mysterious "Angel of the Lord" in whom His "Name" was said to reside. All these are in some sense distinguished from God as His agents or manifestations; but they are never separated from Him as one "person" is separated from another. Indeed the idea of personality is not clear to the Hebrew mind; what comes nearest to it is the idea of "life"; and all that is divine is essentially "living and active," as the Epistle to the Hebrews declares the Word of God to be.

Heb. 4¹²

Now here misunderstanding is likely to arise. Our own words are far from a perfect expression of our being and purpose, partly because we do not always speak the truth, partly because at best our words are inadequate to express our meaning, and above all because our power to make good our words is so very small.

"What do you read, my lord? Words, words, words."

Wisd. 18¹⁵Rev. 19¹³

Thus the expression "the Word of God" loses the majesty which belongs to it; we judge of God's Word by our own. To us nothing seems stranger than to compare the Word of God to a warrior leaping from heaven out of the royal throne, or to speak of the Word of God as arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood. The opening words of St. John's Gospel may easily suggest to us only a divine Teacher revealing supernatural truths, and not a divine Worker with a great redemptive task before Him, and revealing truth primarily to explain His action and to call us to co-operation with Him. But the Hebrew outlook was different, for with God there is no contrast between word and work. "The words that I say unto you," says our Lord, "I speak not from myself, but the Father abiding in me doeth his works." When the

John 14¹⁰

Apostles personify the Word of God which they preach, their language is not merely figurative ; they regard as " living and active " all that is divine. The Word of God is indeed " the power of God unto salvation " ; it " works " in those that believe. Luther seems to have understood this, as the Church of his day did not ; and the important distinction between the Word of God in its numinous power and the theology which the human mind derives from it has been grasped by the Evangelical school in the Church of England as by no other. The Word of God, as Luther said, has hands and feet. It is, as the Revised Version correction of Romans 6¹⁷, reminds us, not so much something delivered to us as something to which we are delivered ; and to believe it is not just to give our intellectual assent to truth, but to welcome the divine purpose for us, and say " Be it unto me according to thy word."

This lofty estimate of the Word of God appears first in the Bible doctrine of creation. " God said, Let there be light, and there was light " ; His Word immediately fulfilled itself in action. " All things were made by " the Word ; " and without him was not anything made that hath been made." It is the same doctrine that is found in the Wisdom Literature, where the divine " Wisdom " is not the immanent reason of the Greeks, but God's joyous master-workman. Moreover, as it is the divine Word or Wisdom which creates, so it is the same Word or Wisdom which preserves and guides to its end all that is thus created ; it is the Word by which all things hold together in one system and are borne on to their goal. If many modern men of science deny that the action of living beings can be explained by mechanistic principles without reference to any purpose which they are seeking to attain, the same truth is here asserted in a different form. Moreover, as it is in nature, so it is in history. Since

Rom. 1¹⁶1 Thess. 2¹³Luke 1³⁸Gen. 1³John 1³Prov. 8³⁰Col. 1^{16, 17};
cf. Heb. 1³

Isa. 55¹¹Jer. 1^{9, 10};
cf. 1 Kgs. 19¹⁷

history is the expression of the divine purpose it is the Word of God which is the Lord of history, and one day the end will be attained. For God's Word never returns to Him void ; it accomplishes that which He pleases, and prospers in the thing whereto He sends it. So it is that the prophet is said to do what he foretells will be done ; it is the Word of God spoken through him that is the power which accomplishes it.

Luke 7³⁰

It may seem that we have wandered far from the thought of the Word of God, as we apply it to the divine message of salvation. But it is not really so, The same Word of God which is the agent of the old creation is the agent of the new, "living and active" in the second case as in the first. The difference is that in the first case the response of human faith is not required, while in the second it is. "*Qui creavit te sine te non salvabit te sine te.*" The Word of God is always the expression of His purpose ; but, while the world of nature cannot "reject" for itself "the counsel of God," the human will can. Thus the Word of God often seems to be reduced to the impotence of our own. But, received with faith, it is still creative ; and what it creates is the Church, a new and living complex of divine activities, superior to the world itself. At first sight it may appear a contemptible product, and it is the poverty of our faith which is in part responsible for this. But God's purpose is always realized slowly, as men account of time ; and the course of physical evolution had a humble and unpromising beginning. It was long before anything like freedom appeared, or there was any possibility of a personal response to the call of God. Had Bishop Butler known of modern science, he might have found a new "analogy" in the slowness of development in the kingdoms both of nature and of grace, and the apparent failures with which the paths of both are strewn.

It is upon the creation and preservation of the Church by the Word of God that our attention must now be fastened, since we cannot otherwise understand either the Church or the Bible. The purpose of God, which the Word of God slowly reveals and realizes, is the creation of a perfect society under the rule of God in an environment worthy of it. It is a social purpose of far horizons, and the human response which it demands is that social and corporate response which only a believing society can give. Thus from the first it is the Church which is the primary consideration, not the individual believer ; and that, not merely because the Church was founded before the individual had fully come into his own, but because a purely individual salvation is not the purpose to be realized. The Church does not come into being through the decision of individual believers to form a society ; it is there from the first, training its members to become believers in deed and in truth, and incorporating " those without " when they come to share its corporate faith. 1 Cor. 5¹²

No doubt at first sight the Bible may seem to bear a different witness. Its story is largely the story of great personalities ; and it is very largely through these that the work of God is done. To these God specially reveals Himself, and each is called by " the obedience of faith " to respond to a Word of God peculiarly his own. But it will be found that in every case the individual call rests upon the purpose of God for the Church as a whole, and that apart from the individual's relation to the Church his call would be devoid of meaning. Scripture contains many calls to separation from the world, but not one to separation from the Church, corrupt as the Church very often is. The saints of God invariably stay within the Church, and witness from within against the evil that they find there ; denunciation from without is almost useless. To " separate ourselves," Rom. 16²⁶ Jude 19

as St. Jude notes, is not a sign of the presence of the Spirit within us, but of His absence. The loneliness of Elijah, or Jeremiah, and above all of the Lord Himself, in no way arises from self-chosen isolation; it arises from so full an activity within the Church of God that no one can fail to be affected by it, though almost all may respond by rejection and cruelty. It is true that in the later history of the Church, we find in the hermits and pillar-saints, though not in monasticism generally, what looks like separation from the Church as well as from the world. But, if St. Simeon Stylites was really obeying a call from God when he retired to his pillar, it must surely have been because God knew, if Simeon did not, that the pillar, like the boat that separated the Lord from the Galilean crowd, was a pulpit which enabled the whole Church the better to hear the message of contempt for the world's pleasures which the life of the saint preached.

We see then that the great personalities of the Bible in no way discount the evidence that the gospel is primarily concerned with the perfect society of the kingdom of God. The Church and its members act and react the one upon the other. Just in so far as the Church fulfils the divine purpose, it does not destroy the individuality of its members, but disciplines, broadens, and enriches it; and, just in so far as the individual fulfils the divine purpose, he finds that all that he is and has is given to him for the building up of the Church in whose corporate salvation he is to find his own.

Now it is this corporate character of the divine purpose which Protestantism has so largely ignored; and, when it ignores it, the truths to which it desires to witness—the value of the individual soul, personal responsibility, the supremacy of conscience, the direct access of the soul to God—lose half their savour. The

value of the individual soul largely lies in its value as an integral part of something far greater ; the very being of a soul is bound up with its relation to other souls, and, the more it isolates itself, the less of a soul it is, and the less is the value that it possesses. Personal responsibility means responsibility to God for the way in which we deal with every man and every institution with which we are or ought to be connected ; and, God's purpose being what it is, there is no personal relationship for which our responsibility is greater than our relationship to the Church. Conscience, to take our third example, is a social product ; a child brought up like Mowgli among the wolves would have no conscience at all, and our views of right and wrong are mostly derived from the moral atmosphere in which we have lived. The better and wiser that atmosphere is, the better informed is the conscience ; and self-chosen isolation produces a diseased conscience, a nuisance to its possessor and everybody else. " If it had might, as "—its possessor thinks—" it has right," it would bring the world into even a worse chaos than we now see. Indeed there is not a word in Scripture about the supremacy of conscience. In the Old Testament the duty of the people of God is to obey the Law ; in the New Testament to obey the Holy Spirit who takes its place. But the Spirit is the corporate heritage of the people of God ; and, though in the last resort we must do what we are convinced that the Spirit calls us to do, it is generally an impertinence to claim that views of duty inconsistent with the general teaching of the Church represent the mind of the Spirit. " What ? was it from you that the Word of God went forth, or came it unto you alone ? " And what is meant by direct access to God ? In a sense we all have it, heathen as well as Christians. But, if there is any meaning in our Lord's words " No one cometh unto the Father but by me,"

1 Cor. 14²⁶John 14⁶

full access to God cannot be separated from Christ, or from membership in the Church, His Body.

But now it is time to turn to the other side. For, if there is a Protestantism which ignores the character of the divine purpose, there is an ecclesiasticism which ignores it as seriously, and glorifies the Church as an institution apart from the fulfilment of the purpose which it is here to serve. The position of honour and privilege which God has given to the Church may minister to pride if we do not understand how responsible, and so how precarious, that position is. Just as it is the Word of God heard and believed which creates the Church, so it is the same Word heard and believed which preserves it; and there can be no continuance of the new creation without continual response to that Word not only as originally understood, but as it takes new shape at each successive turn of the road. The Word of God as originally spoken stands sure, though, as the Bible story shows, it needs to be continually repeated; it is one of the marvels of the Bible that though there is more repetition in it than in any other book, it is always fresh and illuminating. But, till the Word of God reaches its final expression in the Teaching, the Person, and the Work of the Word Incarnate, it is continually being amplified, adapted, guarded, explained, in a sense spiritualized and transformed; and, unless the Church responds—we will not say to God's "increasing purpose," but to the growing revelation of that purpose to us—its life dies down, and it ceases effectively to be the Church at all.

But this it is always difficult for the Church to admit. It knows that "the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance," and that "the gates of Hades" will never "prevail against it." But it forgets that this tells us nothing but that there will always be "a remnant according to the election of grace." Not

Rom. 11²⁹

Matt. 16¹⁸

Rom. 11⁵

only have vast Christian churches in the past been wiped out, but there is nothing in the divine promise of perpetuity except what was given to Israel itself ; and the Church may have to be reduced to a remnant as small as the faithful remnant of Israel which followed the Lord. Life can only be continued by that continual response which is the condition of the Spirit's presence, and this response involves far more than intellectual adherence to the body of truth which the Word of God has been found to involve. It always involves " the obedience of faith," the ceaseless gallant doing and suffering which faith is sure to require. It may seem that, however faithless and corrupt the Church may be, it has always the Word and Sacraments to offer to us ; and that is in a measure true. But the Church's preaching of the Word must always chiefly consist in its own life of response to it, and the sacraments are of little use when the purpose of the divine grace is not understood. The grace of God is given to us in the sacraments not just for our general improvement, but that we may be strong actively to perform the divine will as the divine Word reveals it. They are operative " through faith in the working of God " revealed to us pre-eminently by the Lord's Resurrection ; and, unless we are seeking to live a life of holy activity in union with His risen life, we must not expect them to work at all. Col. 2¹²

Now it is the recurrent evil of false ecclesiasticism to forget all this, and to suppose that there is something meritorious in accepting the Creeds and practising the sacraments, while we either do not know what the Word of God asks of us, or refuse to comply with its demands. Of what use can it be to be members of a body which is not living by the Word of God, or to be dead members of a body that as a whole is so living ? Ideally, the Church is always the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Ghost ; but it is so actually only

so far as Christ can use it as His instrument, and the Holy Ghost really inspires it. The wide revolt from institutional religion so apparent to-day is mainly due to rejection of the Church's faith and moral standards. But with the best of those who stand aloof from the Church the aloofness is largely due to failure to recognize any divine purpose that the Church is forwarding. The creation of a perfected society in a perfected environment is just what they are seeking, and they welcome the co-operation of Christians. But that it is just for this that the Church stands, that the main burden of the Word of God is nothing else than this, and that it is only in the Church as distinct from the world that we can work for it with any hope of success, seems to them paradox, as indeed it seems to many of the best members of the Church itself.

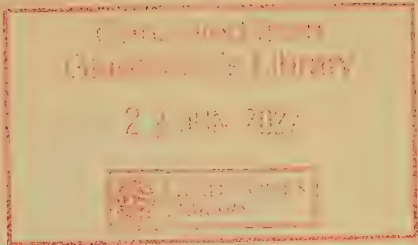
Heb. 1¹

Thus the first thing is a new understanding of the Word of God; and it is in the witness of the Bible to its character that the greatest value of the Bible is found. It contains a wonderful record of the Word of God as spoken in ancient days to the great instruments of God's purpose, to the people of God as a whole in the successive ages of their history, and above all by the Word of God Incarnate and the Church under the fullest and freshest inspiration of His Spirit. At first there may seem to be little unity in the divine message; God speaks in the prophets "by portions" and "in manners" divers indeed; some of its portions seem at first in themselves repellent, and some of its manners unworthy of the God of truth. But as we listen and weigh, the portions begin to fit into their places and the manners to justify themselves by their results. We come to see that fundamentally the Word of God says the same thing from first to last, and does the same thing. It always creates or rebuilds the Church, calls out an elect people to be the sphere of God's peculiar blessing,

and through it the means of His self-revelation to the world. It always so identifies this people of God with the cause of God Himself that all men and all peoples must be judged by their attitude towards it. It always promises that at long last all generations shall call the Church blessed, and desire a blessedness like hers. If we look at the great crises of the Church's history, the call of Abraham, the Exodus, the return from Exile, the Lord's preaching of the Kingdom, and the fuller witness of the Apostles, we find amid all the diversity a marvellous unity: though the Word of God as first spoken seems meagre in substance, earthly in scope, and strangely open to misunderstanding, all the promise of the future is in it. For what God means is always something greater and better than can at the moment be understood; and, as the ages pass, the Church comes to see more of what He meant, and so to interpret old words differently from the way in which they were at first interpreted. What they once meant is one thing, but what they now mean another. In a true sense the end is involved in the beginning, as the world of our experience was involved in the elements with which it began. But no analysis will find the end in the beginning, or enable it to be foreseen; the evolution is creative in the one case as in the other.

Moreover, as the end cannot be foreseen, so neither can the path by which it will be reached; for that depends not upon the Word of God alone, but upon the human response made to it. But this too the Bible records; and as we follow the long story of human faith and faithlessness, of the promise in part fulfilled but in large part waiting for its fulfilment till the true response is given, we gain a revelation of God, of the patience, persistence, and infinite resources of His love, of His readiness even to be "made to serve" by our sins, Isa. 43²⁴ which is itself a Word of God almost as valuable as the

Word of promise itself. In the early pages of the Bible story we shall not expect accurate history, for history is as yet unknown. Legend and fact and allegory will be strangely mingled; later interpretation will often have obscured the original meaning; we may find divergent narratives and interpretations side by side. But both the facts, when we can discover them, and the narratives themselves will be full of instruction, for God had His Hand in both. "These things happened unto them by way of example, and they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come." There are revealing promises and facts, and a revealing record of both, and we must not confine the Word of God to the former to the exclusion of the latter. There may be teaching hidden in the Bible far deeper than its writers knew; and, just as they often came to find more in old words than had been originally understood, so we may find more in theirs. The Church has always believed in mystical interpretation, and that with justice. Caution will be necessary here, and patient investigation of the facts to discover principles; there will be much that is baffling and mysterious. But, where there is a union of the human with the divine, there is always mystery, whether in the Bible, or in the Church, or in the Person of the Lord Himself. Of course the analogy is imperfect; the human element in the Bible and the Church is an element of imperfect and sinful humanity, as in the Lord it was not; God will not be manifested in either of them as He was manifested in the Lord. But the divine element will be present, seeking to reveal itself, and if we look for it we shall not be disappointed. There is under present conditions no higher means available for God's revelation of Himself than human life and human literature; if God could not reveal Himself through them, He could not reveal Himself at all.



CHAPTER III

THE BUILDING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

WE have seen that, though it is to the Church that we owe the Bible as we read it to-day, it is that Word of God which the Bible enshrines which has created and preserves the Church. It is largely the knowledge of this which has led the Church both to preserve the Word spoken in the past, and to build up around it that manifold literature which the Bible now contains. We cannot rightly understand the Word of God unless we understand the situation which demanded it, the response that was made to it, and the fruit which it bore. Thus, though it is the divine message which is alone, strictly speaking, the Word of God, without the Bible it could not be the Word of God to ourselves, and in a broad sense we may give the title to the whole. But we have also seen something else. Just because to the mind of God the end is present from the beginning, much of the Bible demands a progressive interpretation as the ages pass. Its first meaning is a provisional meaning which the Church outgrows, while the full meaning is only recognized when the Lord has come and the Holy Spirit been given.

But can we say that the writers were conscious of this? In some degree they were. St. Peter teaches that the prophets were in doubt as to the time when their anticipations would be fulfilled, and knew that their message was for those who would come after them. But as a rule the writers of the Bible have little conception of progressive revelation. What the Word spoken

1 Pet. 1 10-12

in the past has come to mean they suppose that it meant to those to whom it first was spoken. Sometimes they think of the heroes of the past as if they were their own contemporaries ; they ascribe to them their own thoughts, and place upon their lips their own language, though they preserve so much of the older literature that we are able to correct the representations which they give.

Now it is here that trouble arises between the historical critic and the unlearned Christian. It has been the task of criticism to discover the original meaning of the words of the Old Testament, and its work has been of value to religion. To take but one example, the social teaching of the prophets has done much to rekindle the flame of indignation against social wrong. But the original meaning of the words is often not their meaning as part of Canonical Scripture. It has been transformed by advancing spiritual experience and adaptation to the needs of later days ; and the unlearned Christian sometimes grasps the acquired meaning better than the scholar, since he is primarily interested in what the words mean and not in what they meant. But each interpretation is of value. The scholar need not confine himself to the one, or the unlearned Christian to the other.

Now it is this present meaning of the Bible that the later chapters of this book will attempt to illustrate. But it may be well first to make clear the modes of transformation which can be seen at work. To most modern readers all that savours of " mystical " interpretation is an offence. The words of the Bible, they urge, mean what they originally meant. Once allow mystical interpretation, and anything may mean anything. With this contention, in view of much that is found in the Fathers and medieval writers, it is impossible not to sympathize. Christians after the Apostolic age did

not understand either Jewish modes of thought or Jewish literary methods, while they took over with too little criticism Jewish views of the authorship and inspiration of the Old Testament books. A little later came Marcion with his powerful attack upon the Old Testament, an attack which the Church, having as yet little idea of progressive revelation, was unable satisfactorily to meet. The Church fell back upon "mystical" interpretation. The Old Testament, it maintained, was not and could not be contrary to the New, and all which seemed to be so must have a deeper meaning than at first met the eye. Thus, under the leadership of Origen and others, the writers of the Church, though not altogether neglecting the historical sense, devoted themselves chiefly to the discovery of the hidden, and the result was a license of interpretation which had serious results. In the sixteenth century there was a strong reaction, and mystical interpretation widely fell into disfavour. Moreover, in the last fifty years there has come a great advance in the understanding of the Old Testament, and with it a better answer to Marcion than the Early Church could give. It will, however, be found not only that historical criticism has nothing to say against progressive interpretation, but that it sometimes directly leads to it.

Let us begin with two considerations of great importance.

First, the Bible is what it is, whatever the path by which it has come to be so; and, if we find in it clear indications of a providential guidance of its words, we shall recognize them, even though they seem to have arisen in a fortuitous way. When the theory of evolution first came to be accepted, it seemed to destroy our belief in divine purpose. But it was soon seen that the evidences of purpose remained what they had always been; nothing was altered except our concep-

1 Cor. 3¹¹Ex. 32²⁴

tion of the way in which it had been realized. In point of fact the process was not fortuitous ; but, had it still appeared to be so, our faith need not have been much affected. Now so it is with Scripture. Suppose that the materials which went to the mill had been the strangest medley of gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, and stubble. Suppose that Hebrew folklore, Babylonian science, early Semitic religion, prophecy, and law, national songs and love poetry, court chronicles and priestly homilies, had been jumbled together without any human intelligence much concerning itself with the result. At any rate "there came out" the Old Testament. Whatever it had proved itself to be in the experience of the Church before the materials had been sorted, it still remains afterwards ; and, if there was ever reason to believe that it enshrined deeper meanings than at once caught the eye, that evidence remains unchanged. In fact, the process by which the Word of God and the labours of priests and prophets gradually created the Old Testament was an intelligent process which we are in some degree able to trace ; but what matters is what the Bible is. Historical criticism can have no quarrel with mystical interpretation ; every biblical number and name may be " aflame with God " ; and, if in fact we advance with caution, it is not from fear of the historical critic.

Secondly, mystical interpretation was not invented to deal with Marcion's attack, nor was it just an Alexandrian method taken over from the Greek commentators upon Homer. Origen, the greatest and most critical of early interpreters, speaks of the doctrine that Scripture has a hidden sense as part of " the apostolical tradition " ; and, in view of all the facts, with justice. Let us consider the practice of our Lord Himself. Sometimes He refers to it as a record of the past, and adopts its teaching in its strict historical sense. But sometimes He inter-

pretends and applies it in a way very hard to justify, if the legitimacy of the deeper interpretation be denied. We are not simply concerned with His answer to the Sadducees and His use of the 110th Psalm. The Lord in the Gospels speaks of the Old Testament as rich in prophecies of Himself. The Scriptures, He says, bear witness to Him, and to refuse to believe in Him is to reject their teaching. This witness He finds in "the law," in "all the prophets" and in "the Psalms," and He blames as foolish and slow of heart those who do not recognize its reality. Nor does He merely speak in general terms. His claim to be the Christ presupposes that the Christ has rightly been expected; He refers to His Passion and Glorification as so clearly foretold that the truth of God is bound up with their accomplishment. Indeed, He seems like St. Paul and the Nicene Creed to regard even the third day, on which He will rise, as foretold in the Old Testament. Thus the Christian critic finds himself in serious difficulty. It is not enough to say that the highest ideals of the Old Testament find noble fulfilment in our Lord and His kingdom. The Lord asserts much more than this, and uses the argument from prophecy much as the Church itself has used it after Him.

We should then be justified in insisting upon the deeper sense of Scripture, even though we did not understand how it came to be there. The forms of mystical interpretation which have been employed in the Church are many, some of them being found in the New Testament itself. Mysteries have been discovered in names and in numbers. Scripture narratives have been interpreted as moral or psychological allegories, and different kinds and levels of interpretation distinguished one from another. Above all the divine teaching has been found not only in the facts which the Bible records, but in the Bible record of the facts, God being

Mark. 12^{26, 27,}
36, 37

John 5^{39, 40}

Luke 24^{44, 25}

Mark. 8³¹

believed to have had His Hand in both. It is on this assumption that mystical interpretation often proceeds. Not only do Origen and others recognize that the Old Testament narratives are not always historical, but even when they accept them as historical they argue from the narratives as well as from the history which they record. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to take an example from the New Testament, surely did not suppose that Melchizedek had neither father nor mother ; the basis of teaching is found in the record, not in the facts.

Heb. 7³

1 Cor₃ 10¹¹

Moreover, if this be true of the narratives of the Old Testament, it is also true of the Old Testament as a whole. Its books, we believe, were " written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come " ; and we are primarily concerned with them as we find them in Canonical Scripture to-day. Valuable as historical criticism is, we should not overestimate what it can do. It is often impossible to ascertain either the date of Old Testament writings or the original meaning of their words. All writers make use of words and ideas which have a history ; and where are we to call a halt ? We are reminded of excavations on the site of some old Eastern city. We dig down below the foundations of one city to those of an older one ; but, however far we descend, the point at which we stay our hands is often arbitrarily chosen ; if we dug deeper, we might find the foundations of a still older city. So it is with the language and ideas of the Bible. Though we hunt them into the undergrowth of Iranian mythology, their original meaning may escape us still. Words and phrases, acts of worship and prophecies, narratives and psalms, may change their meaning with the growth of thought and experience—all the more so if a gradual revelation of God and His purpose is taking place : either what is new must " break through language and

escape," or the old language must come to embrace a larger and a different content.

Thus as Christians we are primarily concerned with the Old Testament as Canonical Scripture. When our Lord says that the Scriptures testify of Him, He means the Scriptures as they had come to be in His day, and as He and His contemporaries read them. It is this which the historical critic sometimes forgets. He takes the anticipations of the Lord and His kingdom which Christians from the first have found in the Old Testament, and on the basis of the supposed original meaning of the words denies their deeper content. But often what is called mystical interpretation is not arbitrary interpretation ; it is the right interpretation of what Scripture came to mean.

We consider first the meaning of individual words. The capacity of words for promotion and degradation is remarkable, and they mean at any moment what they are understood to mean. Prepositions, for example, are primarily concerned with spatial relations : they are "of the earth, earthy." If we apply them, as we must, to spiritual relations, they behave as awkwardly as the ploughboys at Mr. Hardcastle's table, and become sources of error. But other words are more adaptable ; their first meaning is a provisional meaning which the Church outgrows, and when once they have got into good society they conceal their humble antecedents. To "sanctify" originally meant to set apart for a religious purpose : pots and pans were as much sanctified as prophets and priests. It was only as the character of God was slowly revealed that setting apart for Him was seen to involve a moral, as well as a physical, "holiness." "Salvation" again had originally to do with physical evils. If primitive men thought it necessary to be saved from sin, it was because sin involved physical penalties. Only as the hope of life eternal

dawned upon the people of God, and they learned the happiness of fellowship with God, did salvation acquire the meaning which we attach to it to-day. Are we then misusing old Hebrew prayers or thanksgivings for salvation when we use them in our own Christian sense? The original meaning will depend partly on the date of the words, and partly on the character of the writers; at all ages the thoughts of the saints are far above those of ordinary men. But we should put upon the old words the highest meaning we can give to them. The language of prayer has always meant what existing thought and experience enabled it to mean, and it has always been *en route* for a meaning beyond the grasp of anyone yet.

We consider secondly the way in which the language of fact passes into the language of metaphor. The crudest anthropomorphism—"the Lord smelled the sweet savour"; the dreadful language which speaks not only of God's wrath, but of His "fury" and mockery of His prostrate enemies; all may be retained long after the thoughts which occasioned it have been purged away. We believe the wrath of God against all who wilfully oppose His purpose and ruin His children to be an awful reality; there is no paradox in speaking of the wrath of the Lamb. But the divine wrath is not a passion which masters God and leads Him into action inconsistent with His normal ways: it is the expression of His abiding character; and the meaning which we attach to the Scripture language to-day is its true meaning, whatever the original meaning may have been. Again, the point of a metaphor may change. What, for example, before the hope of life eternal had clearly dawned was meant by being "a stranger and a sojourner" with God? Apparently that the land of Israel was God's own country, and that those who lived there enjoyed His hospitality and

Gen. 8²¹

Jer. 21⁵, Ez.
5¹⁵, Ps. 59⁸

Rev. 6¹⁶

Gen. 23⁴
1 Chron. 29¹⁵,
Ps. 39¹²

protection. But in the New Testament, and perhaps earlier, the old meaning has been forgotten; we are strangers and sojourners here, because we are seeking a better country. The old meaning no longer concerns us, and like the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews we read the words in our Christian sense. Heb. 11¹³

From words we pass to action, often a form of speech, and specially to the sacrificial action so prominent in the Bible. How are we to interpret Leviticus? The true and abiding meaning is the highest meaning—the one which, we may believe, God had in view from the first, though it took long for His people to arrive at it. Who can certainly tell us the original meaning? With primitive peoples it is the ceremonial of worship which is fixed rather than the interpretation to be attached to it, and the path of progress lies in putting a better meaning upon what is done. The earliest purpose of sacrifice seems to be to feed the god: that is why the altar is called “the Lord’s table.” It took long for the people of God to get rid of this conception, as the indignant protest of the Psalmist shows: “Thinkest thou that I will eat bull’s flesh and drink the blood of goats?” Ps. 50¹³ But sacrifice was not tied to any such conception. Mal. 1^{7, 12} God may accept the gifts of His people as the expression of their homage, their devotion, their gratitude, their desire to expiate the past, and hold communion with them in a sacrificial feast without consuming their food. If blood still remains the most acceptable offering, it may be regarded as the symbol of the life which it is supposed to contain, and the offering come to mean

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

Moreover, if the life of a domestic animal may be given for its owner’s weal, may not the life of a people, or of the faithful remnant of a people, or of some chosen

John 12²⁴⁻²⁶

"Servant of Jehovah," be similarly given? If sacrifice become self-sacrifice, who may set a limit to its power? That power lies, not only in what it does for us, if the life surrendered be imparted to us; but in what it leads us to do in union with it. It seems strange that God should have sanctioned these old Semitic rites, but had He not good reason? And if He had, is not Leviticus to be interpreted by God's thoughts about sacrifice, which the Cross has revealed to us, and not by the thoughts of His people, as we may think we discern them at some particular moment of their history? If we wish to find the "original" meaning, at what point are we to look for originality? The sacrificial system of Leviticus is a reformed system for which priests and prophets have worked hand in hand, and in which the divine holiness is wonderfully expressed. But much of its material may be older than Moses himself; and, though re-interpretation has gone far, it has not yet gone far enough. It is Calvary which must explain Leviticus, and not Leviticus Calvary. Ever since Calvary Leviticus has been full of Christ, a grand witness to His abiding sacrifice for His people, the burnt offering of their full self-surrender, the sin-offering for their sinful past, the peace-offering which satisfies both them and God. Whatever Leviticus may once have meant, it now means Christ, and the larger Christ Who includes His people. If we wish for details, perhaps on some old bookstall we can still find *Jukes on the Offerings* to reopen the wells which the Philistines have stopped.

1 Cor. 12¹²

But now we must consider a different case. This change in the meaning of words is not always brought about unconsciously. We will begin with two books, not certainly part of the Canon of our Lord and the Apostles, the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes. The former was probably before it became Canonical a collection of Palestinian love-songs. But it is almost

certain that the Rabbis admitted it to the Canon as describing the mutual love of Jehovah and His people, and that the Church adopted it on this understanding. Thus, if we ask what it means as a part of Scripture, the answer is that it sets forth the mutual love of Jehovah Incarnate and His Church. It is a part of Scripture on condition that it means that, and we shall interpret it accordingly. That the marriage relation is a symbol of the relation between Christ and His Church is normal Christian teaching; and the Song of Songs, interpreted with restraint and reverence, will supply us with beautiful thoughts about it. The language of lovers is always the language of hyperbole; it ascribes to the loved one a beauty and perfection which belongs to no one but the Lord, and only to Him is it appropriate. Or consider Ecclesiastes. Here the change in meaning has been brought about in a different way. The book has been, we are told, freely interpolated to give it an orthodox sense; and, if it was to be in the Canon, very properly. The book in its original form may have been nearer to the mind of Omar Khayyám than to that of Christ; but as interpreters of Scripture we are not concerned with that. Words which in themselves would bear a heterodox meaning must be interpreted in accordance with the context which the later editors have provided for them. What Ecclesiastes meant is one thing, and what it means is another. Had Ecclesiastes not been preserved to us, our loss would have been very great. There is probably in the literature of the world no truer estimate of human life, if we regard it without faith in God or immortality. The scribes did preserve it, but they also corrected it; and, though their additions may not improve it as literature, they improve it greatly as food for the people of God.

But then this conscious adaptation is not confined to one or two books; it is hard to set a limit to it in the

Old Testament. When, for example, the Psalms became the hymn-book of the Second Temple, many of them could not have been used in their original sense. Consider the 45th. One commentator has suggested that it was a nuptial ode for the wedding of Ahab and Jezebel ; but let us accept the happier suggestion of the wedding of Solomon and his Egyptian princess. Much of it in its original sense would have been no more appropriate to the Temple worship than an ode on the marriage of Charles II and Catherine of Braganza to the worship of St. Paul's to-day. To whom in the worship of the Second Temple could it have been addressed ? Is it not probable that, like the Song of Songs, this and other so-called Messianic Psalms had a new meaning given to them, and that as part of the Psalter they expressed the devotion of Israel to the expected Messiah and to God, whose instrument He would be ? And if so, is it not also probable that the collectors and editors of the Psalms, like those of modern hymnals, sometimes altered the original language and made additions of their own ? Often in the Messianic Psalms, as in the Messianic prophecies, we find words strangely unsuitable to any mere earthly king ; and the words quoted from the 45th Psalm in the New Testament are among them. Nor perhaps is it only the expected Messiah who has transformed the meaning of the Psalms ; the dawning hope of life eternal may have been active also. Did not the later belief in resurrection often transform their meaning ? When St. Peter interprets the 16th Psalm of our Lord's resurrection, there is no reason to think that he startled his contemporaries. The Septuagint had already substituted " my flesh shall rest in hope " for " my flesh shall rest in safety," and God's " Holy One " had probably become a title of the Messiah. The Psalm did not originally witness to the Lord, but it had learned to do so by the time that its witness was required.

Heb. 1^o. •

cf. Ps. 63²³⁻²⁶

But now we may go further still. If in the providence of God the Psalms have been provided for our use in drawing near to Him, are we not as Christians to put our own meaning upon them? By Israel, and Zion, and Jerusalem we shall mean the Church Catholic, for its life is continuous with that of the old Israel; the patriarchs and prophets of Israel were our forefathers in faith and hope, not those of unbelieving Jews. But we shall not stop short there. Taught by St. Paul, 1 Cor. 10 we shall see in Israel's experience of temptation and conflict, of judgment and restoration, the foreshadowing of our own: and, just as he taught us to find in the Red Sea Holy Baptism, and in the manna our Eucharistic food, our support till we reach the heavenly country, so we shall find also our own spiritual enemies in the savage peoples of whom the Psalms and Prophets speak. Is there not a real element of good even in the imprecatory Psalms—hatred of evil as the enemy of God and His purpose for His people? At first, of course, the people of God saw this evil incarnate in such peoples as "Gebal, Ammon and Amalek," and later in the Hellenist persecutors and Jewish apostates of Psalm 37; they distinguished the sinner from the sin even less than they distinguished the individual from the nation to which he belonged, and they spoke accordingly. But we see the dawning of truer thoughts even before the Lord came. If the people of God could not yet think with Him of sinners as sick men needing the physician, they could see that even the hated Nineveh was a plant that God had caused to grow, and that its people were in fact but six-score thousand persons who knew not their right hands from their left. And more than this. Though evil is but an abstraction apart from the evil will in which it is found, is there not evil will more dangerous than man's? The later Jews thought that there was, for they had come to believe, with St. Paul,

Ps. 83⁷Mark 2¹⁷Jonah 4^{10, 11}

Eph. 6¹²

in "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

If we believe as they did, we may use the words in the same sense; and if not, we may think of those only too living forces of pride and lust and selfish anger which are in us, and yet somehow not altogether of us. The stream of life which flows in our veins has reached us from afar, and our natural instincts of combat should be sublimated rather than repressed. The mortal blow struck against our pride or selfishness differs no doubt in kind from the well-directed stroke under the fifth rib of a human enemy, but we need not remember the difference. Let us strike and spare not. "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord."

2 Sam. 2²³Judg. 5³¹

But then it may be urged that such adaptation cannot have taken place in history, for facts are stubborn things. It does not seem that the writers of Israel found them so. They treated the stories of the past with extraordinary freedom when they used them as vehicles for teaching. No doubt there is much in the Old Testament which is strictly historical; the story of Absalom's rebellion is a case in point. It is everything by turns and nothing long, like human life itself; it is filthy and beautiful, full now of humour and now of pathos so unbearable that we can hardly trust ourselves to read it aloud. If it has any obvious moral, we may find it in the picture of the misery and degradation to which polygamy leads. But the Hebrews had little interest in history for its own sake, and their representations of the past were often profoundly affected by the lessons which they wished to teach. The stories of Genesis seem often based upon legends which had gathered round the local sanctuaries of Palestine; but their character is now different indeed. The stone of Bethel may once have been the "pillar" of a local Baal, and Jacob's promise of paying his tithe an example to the worshippers at the sanctuary. Jacob's wrestling

Gen. 28¹⁸⁻²²,
cf. 14²⁰

Gen. 32^{23, 24}

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may once have been with a river-god defending his territory ; it is a far cry from that to Wesley's glorious hymn, "Come, O thou Traveller unknown." But Hosea and others knew how to deal with the old tales, and what they mean is very different from what once they meant. Hos. 12⁴

The story of the Fall, to take a different example, is almost certainly a composite story. The knowledge of good and evil probably once meant, as elsewhere in Scripture, that knowledge which we rightly seek that we may inherit the earth and subdue it. The Hebrews once thought, as the Greeks did, that the gods were jealous of human knowledge and prowess ; we find the same idea in the story of the Tower of Babel. The serpent, though subtle and malignant, was once simply a serpent, the serpent who far less frequently bites our heels than we cruelly and needlessly crush his head. Gen. 3¹
Gen. 11⁶⁻⁷
But the better meaning which the unlearned Christian now puts upon the story is the true meaning as we read it to-day. The forbidden knowledge is the knowledge which God forbids to us not in jealousy, but in love, that knowledge of evil in its contrast with good which sin alone bestows ; and the serpent does now mean Satan as the later Jews came to conceive of him. Rev. 20²
Indeed we may go further still. Had not "the seed of the woman" come to mean the Messiah before the Messiah Himself was born, and do we not find Him in the old folk-tale because He is there ? So with many another passage where our forefathers found the Lord, and we sometimes fail to find Him. We must ask not only what the words originally meant, but what they came to mean, and should mean to us.

We turn now to another point—the Jewish practice of inventing stories or allegories to embody moral and religious truth. The writers of Israel do not always confine themselves to facts, and draw their lessons from

them ; often they start from the lessons which they desire to teach, and embody them in what look like facts. They have no scruples about mingling fiction with history, when they are using both for the same purpose. There is history in the books of Chronicles, copied from older documents, but there is fiction also. The books are written for edification ; and the actors are represented as speaking as the chronicler thinks that they ought to have spoken, and acting as he thinks they ought to have acted. All regrettable incidents have disappeared from the lives of David and Solomon, and their haloes are securely nailed on. The Evangelists are not tempted to misrepresent the life and teaching of the Lord ; that would be to gild the refined gold. But true history is seldom altogether edifying, and the preacher and the moralist are always disposed to substitute something else for it ; while with the writers who have little conception of history edification reigns supreme. Now this Jewish practice of embodying truth in tales may lead us to condemn as "mystical" an interpretation which is entirely sound. Perhaps there is no passage in St. Paul's writings which has met with so much undeserved contumely as his interpretation of the story of Hagar and Ishmael. But, if he interprets it as allegory, he is surely justified. In the early stories and genealogies of the Old Testament names which we regard as the names of individual men are often tribal names. It is so with the names of Abraham's children by Keturah, and it is so almost certainly with Ishmael also. What the old story taught, as St. Paul may have learned from Gamaliel, was that, though the tribes of the desert were near kin of Israel, the covenant and the promise belonged to Israel alone. Israel was a people supernaturally born through faith in the divine Word, while the other tribes were but children of nature, though they too had their share in

Gal. 4²¹⁻³¹

Gen. 25¹⁻⁶

God's care and blessing. St. Paul interprets the story on similar lines. Only, as he ever insists, the promise is not for the carnal, but for the spiritual Israel, the faithful remnant supernaturally born of water and the Word, who have the gift of sonship, and whose mother is the city of God. The meaning which he gives to the story is its final meaning, the only meaning which concerns us to-day.

It would take us too far afield to describe at length the transformation of prophecy, but it follows similar lines. In the first place, the Word of God often means more than it is at first understood to mean; and, as God's purpose comes gradually to be discerned, it is read back into words which did not at first reveal it. In the second place, the scribes, in preserving the words of the prophets, do not forget their own contemporaries. They are not Grub Street hacks, but spiritual teachers; and they adapt the Word spoken in the past to the needs of the present. Such prophets as Amos, the first Isaiah, and Jeremiah are primarily prophets of judgment, and their message was the right message for those to whom they spoke. But the resources of the divine love, as the event has shown, were greater than they knew; and the scribes have rightly interpolated their prophecies, and united them with others of a different character. The book of Isaiah, as we read it to-day, is a wonderful compendium of prophecies of different dates; and far healthier food than the words of the first Isaiah would by themselves have been.

We see then how often an interpretation of the Old Testament, which is not in the modern sense "historical," is none the less not only true interpretation, but for us more valuable than the historical interpretation itself. If we follow the mind of the Church, it is because it is the Church which has formed the Bible as now we have it. But is there not a legitimate inter-

pretation which goes further still, and which finds in Old Testament words a sense really "hidden" before the Lord came, and only to be accepted if we believe that God guided the words of the writers more than they knew? We must be cautious here, and not go further than the facts warrant; we must look for definite principles, as the mystical interpreters of the past have not always done. But is not the "typology" of Scripture worthy of something better than the neglect into which it has fallen? Is it not true that God who, as St. Thomas Aquinas says, can declare His mind by things as well as by words, did declare in the lives of His great instruments something of what His Christ was one day to do and to suffer; and are we merely fanciful when in the words which fall from them we recognize with the greatest mystical interpreter of the New Testament the accents of the Lord Himself? Surely it is not only that history repeats itself, and that, just in so far as men resemble the Lord in their office and their character, they share His "reproach." What of Joseph with his visions of future royalty, the beloved son of his father rejected by the brethren to whom he is sent, and by them betrayed to the heathen; yet passing by His passion to the fulfilment of his destiny, and becoming in the glory that he has won the Saviour of his betrayers, when their penitence has been proved and perfected? What of Moses, the first redeemer, as the Jews called him, refusing the kingdom of the world and its glory, rejected by his brethren yet returning to save, calling them out from their slavery, giving the law from the mountain, inaugurating the new covenant and the abiding priesthood? What of David, the king of God's own choice, whose "sure mercies" are never to pass away? What of Isaiah, the rejection of whose message the Lord regarded as the type of the rejection of His own, gathering a band of disciples round him to

S.T.I. i. 10

Heb. 2¹¹⁻¹³Heb. 11²⁶Acts 13³⁴Matt. 13^{14, 15}

whom his teaching is committed, and to be the remnant upon which the Church is to be rebuilt? What of Jeremiah in whom some have seen the Suffering Servant of Jehovah of Isaiah 53? What of "the sign of Jonah the prophet," giving his life for the mariners, and passing through seeming death and resurrection to be the evangelist of the heathen world? The arm of coincidence may be long, but is it long enough to explain all this? Matt. 12⁸⁹

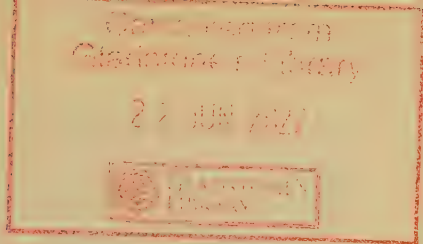
What is this psalm from pitiable places,
 Glad where the messengers of peace have trod?
 Whose are these beautiful and holy faces
 Lit with their loving and aflame with God?
 Eager and faint, empassionate and lonely,
 These in their turn shall prophesy again:
 This is his will who hath endured, and only
 Sendeth the promise where he sends the pain.

When the Lord by His Word or by His Spirit "in all the Scriptures" interpreted the things concerning Himself, did He confine Himself to the meagre illustrations of our modern reference Bibles, or did He find the Psalms and the "faces" of the past alike His own, and teach that the hour had come for the bearers of the promise and the pain once more to prophesy? Luke 24²⁷

And yet again, what of Israel itself? It is the doctrine of the New Testament that Christ and His people are one. But did not Israel always foreshadow Him? Israel, as we have seen, was a people supernaturally born through faith in the divine Word. It went down to Egypt in its infancy, but returned to live its life in the land of promise. It was forty years tempted in the wilderness. Its passion is described in Isaiah 53, and its resurrection in Ezekiel 37, and only after its resurrection came the fulfilment of its mission to the world. Moreover, there is hardly an Old Testament phrase applied in the New Testament to the Lord which had not been borne by Israel before He came.

Ex. 4²² Israel was God's son, His firstborn ; it was the stone
 Ps. 118²² rejected by the builders to become the head of the
 Isa. 53¹⁰ corner ; it was the servant of Jehovah slain for the sins
 Jer. 2²¹, Ps. of others, but prolonging his days for the fulfilment of
 44² Isa. 52⁶ Jehovah's purpose ; it was the vine, and the light of
 Dan. 7¹³ the world ; it was the son of man brought near to the
 Ancient of Days and receiving dominion from Him.
 Gen. 13¹⁵ It was the one seed of Abraham to whom the promise
 was made. If St. Paul in Galatians 3 as well as in
 Galatians 4 " interprets Rabbinically," how else in view
 of the facts should he interpret ? The divine purpose
 for Israel is fulfilled through the Lord Himself, and
 through the true Israel, his members, after Him.

These illustrations of the typology of Scripture are illustrations only, and they can be multiplied indefinitely. The facts are there for all to see, and Christians have had no hand in creating them. Our belief in the deeper sense of Scripture is, like our belief in inspiration itself, not a belief which we bring to Scripture, but a belief that we derive from it, and which we maintain only as far as the facts carry us.



CHAPTER IV

ABRAHAM, OR FAITH

Now it is with these facts in view that we should read the Old Testament from first to last. Not only is it from the Church that we have received it, but it is the Church which under God has made it what it is. We shall shut our eyes to nothing that the critic has to tell us ; but we shall find the Word of God which creates and sustains the Church at work from the first, and its content more and more unfolded till it finds its culmination in the Word Incarnate. " O Lord, Thy Word endureth for ever in heaven " : in the mind of God it is all from the first that it will ever be. But to us, who must gradually learn its content, it has grown from less to more. The word of man seldom means more than lies upon the surface, if indeed it means as much. But the Word of God is " Spirit and life," and grows in meaning as the ages pass. Whither it went men knew not at first, and how could they know the way ? They had to learn it by walking in it. But, as they went, the Word of God went ever with them, speaking to them as their contemporary, and leading them more and more to recognize its meaning. Ps. 119⁸⁹

What then should our point of departure be ? We should begin with the call of Abraham, where the creation of the Church by the Word of God first distinctly appears. The stories of the patriarchs, as we read them to-day, have been drawn from sources of varying age and value, and embody much of the later thought and experience of the people of God. But there is a historical nucleus beneath them, though we cannot define its John 6⁶⁸
cf. John 14⁵

Gen. 14¹ extent. Amraphel, King of Shinar, is almost certainly
 Hammurabi, the great Babylonian king, and Arioch,
 King of Ellasar Eriaku, King of Larsa, his contemporary ;
 Gen. 26¹ and, though the patriarchs could not have found Philis-
 Am. 9⁷ tines in the Holy Land, for God did not " bring up the
 Philistines from Caphtor " till long after their day, his-
 Gen. 23 tory has no quarrel with Ephron the Hittite. But what
 Gen. 11³¹ of Abraham's " call " ? No doubt the migration of
 Terah's company was a natural event. Israel was once
 Gen. 25¹⁻⁴ a wandering tribe, near kin, as it confessed, to others that
 have passed away. But that the impulse which led it
 from its old home was one which came from God its after
 history assures us, and it would have been to its tribal
 leader that the impulse was given.

We turn then to the Word of God, as we find it first
 spoken ; and, if its content seems to us too lofty to have
 been understood by a contemporary of Hammurabi, that
 is the fault of our translators. Let us read it in the trans-
 Gen. 12¹⁻³ lation of Dr. Moffatt. " Said the Eternal to Abraham,
 Leave your country, leave your kindred, leave your
 father's house, for a land that I will show to you ; I will
 make a great nation of you and bless you and make you
 famous for your bliss ; those who bless you, I will bless,
 and anyone who curses you I will curse, till all nations of
 the world seek bliss such as yours." Here there is no
 command to Abraham to be a blessing to others, nor a
 word about all families of the world being blessed in
 him. But we should not wonder at this. If the Word of
 God is to make an appeal to men, its promise must be
 upon the level of their present desires. The time will
 John 3¹² come when it will speak of " heavenly things," but it
 must speak of earthly things first ; if primitive men are
 to love what God commands, they must desire what He
 promises. On the surface the promise to Abraham looks
 like favouritism unworthy of the Father of all, and for
 many a century Israel seems to have seen no more in it.

It showed no desire to be a blessing to the world, or sense that it ought to be one ; and, though the missionary spirit was aroused at last, it was the exclusive nationalism of the Jews which was largely responsible for their rejection of the Lord, and their hatred of St. Paul. If then Abraham and his caravan left Haran with no higher hope than a great increase in their prosperity, they are not to be blamed. Let us notice how much the promise contains which could have been understood by Abraham himself.

In the first place, it brings a revelation of God, as One who has a purpose to be accomplished and is able to accomplish it. Every great prophet will declare this purpose ; our Lord, the Preacher of the Kingdom, will make it the centre of His message ; and the Church will witness to it before all the peoples of the world. Indeed, it lies behind the first article of the Creed. " I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth " is far more than an expression of belief in God as the Creator of the world. There lies behind it faith in God's revealed purpose ; and in His power to accomplish it, in spite of all the difficulties we may place in the way.

In the second place, the promise made is from the first a promise to a community. God's purpose will be fulfilled to and by it ; and the individual must be a member if he is to inherit the promise. That too is an abiding principle. We cannot in the deepest sense have God for our Father, unless we have the Church for our mother. All forms of faith which go back to Abraham share this conviction, though they differ as to where this community is to be found. The Jew believes in Israel ; indeed in modern days he may continue to believe in Israel when he has ceased to believe in God. The Muhammadan believes in Islam, and the Christian in the Catholic Church. Moreover, if we inquire how God deals with those outside, the promise to Abraham provides the answer to be given. The cause of God is so one with the

cause of His people, that He judges those without by their attitude to those within. All through the Bible, if we hear of judgment or blessing for the heathen world, it is almost always because of its conduct towards the people of God. Our Lord's parable of the Sheep and the Goats is the crowning example.

In the third place, the claim of God is for faith, and not for obedience to an external law. Abraham has to take God at His Word, and act upon the promise made to him. The Gospel will always make this the primary demand. Just in so far as Jews or Muhammadans put the Mosaic code or the Koran in the place of the promise, and substitute for faith the works of the law, they cease to be children of Abraham; and so-called Christians who do the like are in no better case. The importance of Abraham lies just in this, that, as St. Paul shows, he is the typical believer.

Rom. 4

Thus the Bible never allows us to forget the call of Abraham. But is there in it no more than meets the eye, and the apparent favouritism a real one? Such difficulties set us thinking, and it is through overcoming them that progress in understanding is made. It is not just a question of God's doing as He wills with His own, and bestowing blessing upon Abraham more richly than upon other men. Other nations are to be judged by their attitude to him and his family, and we ask why. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Gen. 18²⁵

Now to this difficulty there can be but one answer. If "for every man and nation" God's blessing is to depend upon behaviour to Israel, and when Israel is known there "comes the moment to decide," God's people must share Abraham's faith and obedience, and be ready for Abraham's sacrifice. But are we not now deserting Genesis for the Epistle to the Romans? Not at all: the story of Genesis is on St. Paul's side, even

when it comes from the primitive source. "J." "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am going to do, seeing that Abraham is to become a large and powerful nation, and that all nations of the world are to seek bliss like his? I have chosen him that he may charge his sons and his household after him to follow the directions of the Eternal by doing what is good and right, so that the Eternal may fulfil for Abraham what he has promised." The promise is clearly a conditional promise. It looks forward to Abraham's influence, and it can only be fulfilled in so far as his influence bears fruit; the Church will remain the Church only in so far as it believes and obeys. Though the seed of Abraham is not "seeds many," but a corporate unity, the unity is found not so much in a common physical descent as in a common response to his influence. The great prophets will always deny that God's blessing can rest upon a disobedient and gainsaying people, and fix their hopes upon the faithful remnant. They will denounce judgment upon Abraham's degenerate descendants, and say that Abraham himself disowns them. Our Lord Himself will insist upon the same thing. At every stage the true seed of Abraham will be the seed that believes and obeys; and, when the Christ has come, the seed of Abraham will be the seed which believes and obeys the Christ and finds its unity in Him. Thus when Abraham looked forward to the fulfilment of the promise, it was the day of Christ that he rejoiced to see; though, as it broke upon the far horizon, he saw not yet the sun which was scattering the darkness.

But there is more in the promise than this. It was not, as first understood, a promise of blessing to the world, but it would in time become this. The God in whom Abraham believed was probably the moon-god "Sin": for Sinai was the name of Israel's sacred mountain. Abraham would not have thought of Him

Gen. 18¹⁷⁻¹⁹Gal. 3¹⁶Isa. 63¹⁶John 8³³⁻⁴⁰John 8⁵⁶

as interested in other nations. Might they not, however, attach themselves to Israel and to Israel's God, and so share the blessing? If Israel was not to be God's missionary, what could its position bring but national pride within and envy and hatred without? Dr. Moffatt may rightly reject the translations, "Be thou a blessing," and "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed"; but how can those who are not a blessing themselves be truly blessed? The world-call will be heard by Israel in time; it will appear in the Second Isaiah, and very clearly in the Book of Jonah. The Septuagint translators will find in the promise what Dr. Moffatt does not yet find in it, and through them "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" will be the interpretation of the New Testament. And rightly so. It is better with the simple reader to think that Abraham understood more than he did than to think with one more critical that God meant less than He did. We should translate with the accuracy of Dr. Moffatt, and interpret with the insight of St. Paul.

But is this view of the Church borne out by the later story of Abraham? The Bible, as we have seen, records much more than the bare Word of God; it records the response made to it and the life to which it leads, and so enables us more fully to understand it. Was then the promise pledged to the whole company which went out from Haran, or did its fulfilment depend upon the continuance of the faith and sacrifice by which at first it was met?

Now the whole story represents the faith of Abraham as no mere momentary response. The act of faith was the beginning of a life of faith, sustained under trials and difficulties of which no hint had at first been given; and "the promise" of God was not confirmed by "the oath" of God, until the final test had been

endured. Abraham had to "make his calling and election sure"; if he "had been mindful of that country from which" he went out, he "would have had opportunity to return." So it always is. The Word of God has many things to say to us that we cannot immediately bear; it speaks at first of the joy set before us and not of the suffering by which it must be won, and the Word spoken by the Lord was no exception in this. But the Cross must come, and faith and obedience persist in spite of it. Even Abraham's faith fails at times, and when it fails he receives just rebuke even from the world.

But if the need for continued faith is plain in the case of Abraham, it is plainer still in the case of Lot. Lot soon ceased to be a pilgrim; the deceitfulness of riches choked the Word. He settled in a city where men were "sinners against the Lord exceedingly"; and, though he did not altogether forfeit the divine care, his family had nothing of the pilgrim spirit, and Moab and Ammon were never a part of the people of God. Lot no doubt was "sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked," but there was no force in his witness against it; while Abraham, except when his faith failed, always won the respect of those about him, and was recognized as a power by them. Indeed he is a noble example of the right relation of the Church to the world. He does not stand aloof from it; he succours it in defensive war; he rescues its captives; he intercedes with God for it. What he will not do is to identify himself with it, or to come under any obligation to it: "I will not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet nor aught that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abraham rich." So again he will do business with Ephron as one great gentleman with another; but he will pay the full price for what he buys. For the Church to depend upon the world is to show its mistrust of the

2 Pet. 1¹⁰Heb. 11¹⁵John 16¹²John 16¹⁻⁴Gen. 12¹⁸Gen. 13¹³2 Pet. 2⁷

Gen. 14

Gen. 18²³ ffGen. 14²³Gen. 23⁹

divine promise ; if it does not manifest its independence, neither does it manifest the power of God from which its independence comes.

We pass now to the later story. Abraham remains a pilgrim to the end. God gives him "none inheritance in the land of promise, no, not so much as to set his foot on." But the land will one day be his ; and he stakes his claim by the altars which he builds there, and the purchase of the cave where one day his body will rest. That is the Church's way—the altar first which claims the land for God, and the bodies of the saints sleeping hard by. So in after days, when the promised inheritance will seem to have been lost for ever, Jeremiah will buy the field at Anathoth, and the disciples of the Lord will lay up treasure for a kingdom which has yet to be. Faith does not talk, but acts. Meanwhile, the promise is still understood of earthly blessing, for we must not retain "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." Dr. Moffatt's translation is right—"I will shield you ; rich your reward shall be" ; but it will mean the same thing one day, for there can be no exceeding great reward but God Himself. As, however, the hope of immediate fulfilment is disappointed, the promise itself grows wider in its scope. Israel, like Abraham himself, will be driven down to Egypt—thence God always calls His sons ; and there it will not reign but serve, till God redeems it by His mighty Hand. God has His "times and seasons" ; He takes account of other nations, and "the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full."

But how will the promise be fulfilled ? Abraham and Sarah are growing old, and still they are childless. It is here that the second test of faith is found. The seed to which the promise is made must be supernaturally born through the Word of God, accepted by faith ; the promise is for the child of promise ; and

Abraham rises to a new level of acceptance when the new promise is believed. We see here again an abiding principle. Human effort can never win supernatural life; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." John 3⁶

But it is only when the flesh has tried to win it, and finds its efforts vain, that God can work. There was nothing wrong according to the ideas of the time in Abraham's relation to Hagar, and Ishmael had his place in the loving care of God. But the true seed must be the child of Abraham's faith, not of his natural energies; and Abraham must be "confident in self-despair" before Isaac, or "Laughter" can be born. "Laughter" is Isaac's right name, for laughter arises from pleasure at the unexpected. How profoundly St. Paul understands the story of Abraham! "Without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead . . . and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yea, looking unto the promise of God he wavered, not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised he was able also to perform." That is faith's way. It never bandages its eyes, as the false reading of the Authorised Version suggests; it looks all the facts in the face. But it looks also at the promise of God and refuses to be discouraged, for God is the Giver of life, and bestows it in answer to faith just as He wills. Every great act of faith which Scripture records will follow the pattern which Abraham has given; it will be an act of faith in God the Giver of life where the conditions of life seem to be absent. The faith of Moses in the rebirth of Israel, and of prophet after prophet in its rebirth, when all true life seems again to have departed; the faith of Mary at the Annunciation, and of every convert who comes forward to baptism to receive an answer to his faith—they are all the same in principle. The promise to Sarah looks forward to the

Gen. 16

Rom. 4^{19, 20}

1 Pet. 3²¹

Luke 1³⁷

- promise to Mary, as the promise to Mary will one day look back to the promise to Sarah; and both look forward to all the new births of those who by the response of faith are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." How could the Lord do otherwise than be born of a virgin? The Church of God had been in travail to bring forth age after age. But she had to learn that she could not of herself produce her Redeemer; He must be simply the gift of God. She too must grow "confident in self-despair." When Israel is enslaved under an Edomite King, and the house of David has come to the carpenter's bench, the Redeemer will be given. So too with all that Redeemer's members. The gift of new life in baptism will be a life given in answer to their faith; and the example of faith which St. Paul sets before them is not the faith of Abraham when he left his country, but the faith which made possible the birth of Isaac.
- John 1¹⁸ Can we wonder then that St. Paul interprets the story of Hagar as he does? Abraham had many sons, but Sarah alone was "mother of the free." The rest must receive their gifts and depart, for the slave "abideth not in the house for ever." The children of Abraham are those who "do the works of Abraham," and in whom by faith the Word of God has "free course"; the rest, for all their zeal for the law, are "the bondservants of sin." But it is not necessarily for ever. If for unbelief they have lost their place in the good olive-tree, by faith their place can be restored to them. Israel after the flesh and Islam, with their devotion each to its law, are as yet slave-mothers in bondage with their children; and the slave-mother, Israel after the flesh, has like Hagar been persecuted by the Church, the mother of the free. But Israel must "return and submit herself" to her mistress, and all
- Micah 4¹⁰
- Rom. 4³
- Gal. 4²¹⁻³¹
- Gen. 25⁶
- John 8³⁵
- John 8³⁹
- John 8³⁷
- John 8³⁴
- Rom. 11^{20, 23}
- Gal. 4²⁵
- Gen. 16^{6, 9}

will be well with her ; and on like terms with Islam too.

We pass to the final testing of Abraham's faith. Once more there is an abiding principle revealed, which is illustrated all down the Scripture story and finds its crowning expression in the Cross. Supernatural life is a life which must pass through death. " Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall unto the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone ; but if it die it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." The modern scholar may suggest to us that the sacrifice of Isaac is a story to condemn human sacrifice, and justify the substitution of animals. Perhaps there was a time when this was all that the story meant, for in one early code of Israel the sacrifice of the firstborn appears to be commanded. But is it all that the story means? Let the Epistle to the Hebrews answer. " By faith Abraham being tried, offered up Isaac ; yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son ; even he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called : accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead ; from whence he did also in a parable receive him back." The greatness of the sacrifice asked does not depend just upon the love of Abraham for Isaac, but upon his love for him as the supernatural gift of God, and the instrument of the fulfilment of the promise. If the promise of the inheritance of Abraham's seed, and the call to sacrifice him are alike from God, plainly a resurrection there must be ; it is the life sacrificed which will inherit the kingdom, and be a blessing to the world.

And what " a parable " it is ! May it not even throw light upon the Lord's Agony in Gethsemane? What was there the source of the struggle? Not surely any shrinking

Gen. 22²

John 12^{24, 25}

Ex. 22²⁹

Heb. 11¹⁷⁻¹⁹

from physical pain. Rather the Lord was, and knew Himself to be, the Christ of God, on whom the fulfilment of God's purpose depended. How, if God's purpose was to be fulfilled, could the Christ die? How could His God—the God of the promise—forsake Him? When His self-surrender was perfect, might not the cup pass from Him as it had passed from Isaac? But if He must die, then He will “rise again.” For the Lord, as for Abraham, it was the last trial; and when it was overcome the promise of God was confirmed by the oath of God, “that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.” It is because the Lord's sacrifice was even unto death that it was the path to His own inheritance, the inheritance which through Him will be also ours. Only, of course, for us too the new birth implies a daily dying, if the life bestowed is to be continually maintained.

Heb. 6¹⁸

2 Cor. 4¹⁰

Eph. 3¹⁵

Is there a deeper meaning still? Wherever there is true fatherhood, as David's to Absalom and Abraham's to Isaac, there must be a revelation of Him from whom all fatherhood takes its name; and already, though dimly, we begin to see that the perfect life is the imitation of God, and that God asks no sacrifice but the imitation of His own. The creation cannot in love “surpass the Creator, the end what began.” The Lord is the revelation of the Father, the image of Him, not that we have “made to ourselves,” but which He has made for us. As Isaac's sacrifice was also Abraham's, so the Lord's sacrifice was also the Father's. When the Lord went to Calvary He was not alone, for the Father was with Him; “they went both of them together.” So St. Paul seems to have understood the story: “He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all

John 16³²

Gen. 22⁸

Rom. 8³²

things?" The "all things" are the "all things" which the gospel promises, the "all things" of the inheritance which the Lord has won. So it is that the mystical interpreters have seen in Isaac bearing "the wood of the burnt-offering" the Lord bearing His Cross; and, if we accept the highest meaning of the story as the truest meaning, it is right to see Him there. Such interpretation may to some seem childish, but it is not therefore the less likely to be true. If the Bible is an apostle of God, the providence of God must so have ordered it that it can pay its debt "both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish." It is just such little things as these which are the treasure of the lowly, and profit them the more because they discover them for themselves. The mystery of divine self-sacrifice can be grasped by the philosopher as little as by the child; the sacrifice by a father of a son on whom all his hopes are resting is just a symbol divinely given to help all alike. We may try to replace it by some other conception; but we shall find that our substitute is no nearer to the reality, and far inferior in power. If to the eyes of God anything could be invisible, the difference between the mind of the philosopher and that of the child would be so; and the translation of the divine thought into human terms require as great condescension in the one case as in the other. But the ways in which Scripture has witnessed to Christ in different ages have varied with the minds to which the witness has been addressed. Every one, as the Rabbis said of the manna, has found it to taste like the food that he loved best.

A few words in conclusion. How far the stories of Abraham contain historical elements we cannot say. The reasons why we cannot accept them as they stand are historical and critical, not the difficulties which the supernatural presents; for, if we believe the Church to

be a supernatural society, we expect to find its origin supernatural. But about the profundity of the teaching which these stories contain there can be no question. It has indeed been suggested that, if expositors applied the same ingenuity to the interpretation of any other book, they could discover just as much hidden teaching. Anyone who thinks this should try. Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* is a noble book, and the manner of its compilation is remarkably similar to that employed in the book of Genesis. Moreover, Malory was a Christian with many centuries of Christian teaching behind him, and thus had advantages denied to the Old Testament writers. Let then anyone who rejects the mystical interpretation of the Old Testament try his hand at the mystical interpretation of Malory, and show us what can be done. In this chapter the story of Abraham has not been chosen because it specially lends itself to interpretation of this kind; more striking examples might perhaps have been found. It ought not, *ex hypothesi*, to be difficult to expound Malory in a similar way. But, if the attempt is not very successful, it will follow that there is something in the Old Testament which needs more attention than it generally receives. Somewhere the finger of God must be found in it. We may find it in the facts, if we believe them to be historical, or in the writers and compilers, if we do not. In the second case the inspiration of the writers must be high indeed. Yet again, we may find it in a divine overruling of their words to convey a meaning of which they were themselves unconscious, or, best of all, in facts and record and divine overruling alike. What we cannot do is to deny its presence. The more that we attempt to treat the Bible like other books, or other books like the Bible, the more we shall discover the difference between them.

CHAPTER V

THE EXODUS, OR REDEMPTION

IT is a greater story to which now we come—the story of the making of a nation so bound up with God's purpose that, whether in joy or anguish, it must endure to the end. The Bible narrative has here its Exodus, as well as the nation of which it speaks. It issues, though slowly and with difficulty, from the twilight of folklore and legend into the day of history. No doubt we must be cautious still. Though Moses of course could write, and we read of his doing so, we cannot prove that anything which here we read was written till many centuries after his death. The narratives of Exodus, like those of Genesis, differ in their age, in their purpose, in their historical and spiritual value; and they are not always skilfully combined and arranged. But the main facts have their truth written upon their faces. Even those who deny the existence of Abraham seldom doubt that of Moses, or the reality of the deliverance which was effected through him. Indeed one consideration may alone suffice. Though all nations like to glorify their ancestors, we find no glorification of Israel here. We read that Israel's ancestors were bondmen, that it was by no prowess of their own that they were delivered, and that they continually failed to answer to God's purpose and to obey the leader whom He raised up. Nor is there any reason to doubt the greatness of Moses himself. In after days much came to be ascribed to him of which he never dreamed. But the vast difference between the best moral and religious standards of Israel

Rom. 11²⁵⁻²⁶

Num. 33¹.

Deut. 31^{9, 24}

and those of the surrounding nations needs explanation ; and it is to Moses that the people of God looked back as not only the greatest of their deliverers, but of their prophets also.

Now the Exodus is the first story of divine redemption. There will be many to follow it in the pages of the Old Testament, and one—ininitely greater—in the pages of the New. But the same God will be at work in all ; and His methods will be the same till the end. Indeed, in the story of Abraham we have seen them already, for God redeems the Church as He creates it. First, He has always a purpose of far horizons. Though He “ knows the sorrows ” of His people, and “ in His love and in His pity ” redeems them, He has a purpose for them to fulfil, and redeems them that they may accomplish it. Secondly, His redemption is corporate rather than individual. The individual is redeemed in the redemption of the body to which he belongs ; and he must be attached to the body, if he is to share its blessing. Thirdly, what God requires is the “ obedience of faith ” in His creating and redeeming Word. It was not the law which brought Israel out of Egypt. Redemption comes first, and the law afterwards ; for it is only a redeemed people which can obey it.

Moreover, it will be as we watch the unfolding drama that we shall receive the first great revelation of the divine character ; for God reveals Himself in redemption as in no other way. “ The Lord, the Lord, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth ; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin : and that will by no means clear the guilty.” It is no accident that these words are first found in the book of Exodus ; they summarize all that the divine redemption declared God to be. So it will be always. The great saying “ God is Love,” when at last we reach it, will be a

Ex. 2²⁴, 25, 3⁷
Isa. 63⁹

Rom. 16²⁶

Ex. 34⁶, 7

1 John 4⁸⁻¹⁰

corresponding summary of our experience of God in the work of the Lord. Nor is the revelation only of the moral attributes of God, for it is redemption which reveals His wisdom and power as well as His love. It was not philosophy which taught Israel that their God was ruler in the world of space and time, but their actual experience of His mighty Hand and stretched-out Arm. Thus, as we read the story, we shall be prepared for manifestations of God's supernatural power, though we may not discover the exact form which they took. So real were they, so profound the effect which they produced upon the mind of Israel, that through all their after history they remained the great proof of the power and love of their God, and the great encouragement to look for His further manifestation in the future. The Exodus was to Israel what the Lord's Resurrection is to the Church to-day. We shall then read the story, sure that it is "no vain thing" for us. It will have a symbolic as well as a literal meaning, looking forward to a greater deliverance, and teaching us how to respond to that.

What first of Egypt itself? It is the most wonderful of the old kingdoms of the world, and the abiding symbol of those kingdoms, as they attract the Church by the good things which they offer to her, and the protection which they seem to afford. Abraham goes down into Egypt with unhappy consequences; and Isaac is tempted to go down. Joseph is taken there, though not by his own will; that is why, alone of God's servants, he is of service to Egypt. Through Joseph, Jacob and his family are brought to Egypt, and have much to suffer before they can return. So too in later days. It is upon Egypt, Isaiah finds, the "Rahab that sits still," that Israel desires to rest rather than upon God; and, when the blow from Babylon has fallen, the miserable remnant of the people, in spite of Jeremiah's

Ex. 10¹, 2,
1 Pet. 1³

Gen. 12¹⁰,
26¹, 2

Gen. 37²⁸

Gen. 45¹³

Isa. 30², 7

Jer. 42¹⁴,
43⁵⁻⁷

warning, goes down to Egypt again. Out of Egypt God ever has to call His sons ; and, if the infant Jesus had not gone down there, He would not have “ fulfilled all righteousness ” by sharing the experience of His people. Once more, Egypt in the Apocalypse stands for apostate Jerusalem, as Babylon stands for Rome ; and the true Israel must go forth to Christ without the city to live again a wilderness life, and be fed with heavenly food.

We should find then in the opening chapters of Exodus an abiding picture of the kingdoms of the world in their relation to the Church which dwells among them. Egypt in the past has owed much to Joseph, as the kingdoms of the world in East and West have owed much to the Christian scholars and statesmen whom they have employed ; and for a time it is friendly. But it knows nothing of the divine calling of Israel. It wishes the Church to labour at the world’s tasks, at first with a plentiful supply of State straw, and abundant “ cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlick ” ; and later, when past benefits have been forgotten, under conditions less acceptable. Moreover, as the Church multiplies, the world becomes alarmed ; it fears both the Church’s power and the Church’s detachment. What it desires is a Church so national as to be subservient, and to have no higher end than national welfare. It does not at all desire an *imperium in imperio*, or a Church to which one kingdom of the world means little more than another. Pharaoh’s attack upon the men-children is more than a rehearsal of the slaughter of the innocents. The world, like George Meredith, desires its women to be Christians, but not its men. When that happens, the redeemer is due. God must say by him to the world, “ Let my people go, that they may serve ”—not you, but—“ Me.”

How then does redemption come ? There is but one Redeemer ; and the language of Scripture always recog-

Hos. 11¹,
Matt. 2¹⁵

Matt. 3¹⁵

Rev. 11⁸

Heb. 13¹³

Rev. 12⁶

Ex. 1⁸

Ex. 5^{1, 3}

Ex. 1^{11, 14}

Num. 11⁵

Ex. 5⁷

Ex. 1^{9, 10}

Ex. 1^{22, 10¹¹}

Ex. 9¹

Ex. 3^{7, 8},
Micah 6⁴

nizes this. But God acts through men ; and, in so far as He does so, men have " the value of God." Moses is " God " both to Pharaoh and to Aaron ; and to Israel, not only prophet and priest, but redeemer too. Thus, as the " first redeemer," we expect the foreshadowing of the Lord by Moses to go far, and to be found in little things as well as great. " The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me ; unto him ye shall hearken." The words in their immediate context are the charter of Old Testament prophecy, of the rule of God as exercised through His Word all down the ages. But, as Israel recognized, there never arose until the Lord came a prophet like unto Moses ; and, though the words originally meant one thing, they came to mean another, even before the Lord was born. The many prophets of Israel were forerunners of the One ; and, when He came, the others were almost forgotten. It is the message of the Lord Himself that Moses brings, His " reproach " that he welcomes, His victory by sacrifice that he anticipates through a like identification of himself with the people of God, His Church that he builds, and guides to the promised land.

Now the stories of the Exodus were many, and what we read to-day is the Church's " Harmony " of them all. That is why there is so much repetition and not a little inconsistency. Moses was apparently the first-born son of his mother ; but his father had an older family, to whom the greatness of their brother was not always welcome. Perhaps the Lord's experience is already foreshadowed here. Moreover, Moses was so " goodly " that a special purpose was felt to rest upon him ; and, like the Lord, he has to be carefully preserved from the cruelty of the king. But, " saved through water," he grows to manhood, with the glory of " the kingdoms of the world " ever before his eyes, and yet

Ex. 4¹⁶, 7¹Deut. 18¹⁵, ffDeut. 34¹⁰⁻¹¹John 1²¹, 2⁵,
4⁵Acts 3²², 7³⁷Heb. 11²³Num. 12¹, 2Ex. 2²Ex. 2¹⁰ cf.
1 Pet. 3²⁰, 2¹Heb. 11²⁶

undazzled by them. He accounts "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," for he looks unto "the recompense of reward" in the inheritance promised to his people. At first, however, he goes astray, as the Lord's quotation from the narrative will one day make clear. He usurps the functions of the secular government, and thinks by his own activity to build the city of God in Egypt's "green and pleasant land." That means failure with Egypt and Israel alike. God alone can build the city. Moses, when the time comes, will be sent to proclaim God's kingdom, to call His people to believe in it, and to sacrifice all for it. But God must bring it into being, and He will do so if His people obey Him and walk by the highway of the Cross. First, however, Moses must be led into the wilderness to receive the revelation of God; and it is his honest effort to help his people in his own way which leads to his preparation for helping them in God's.

Ex. 3 We turn then to the vision at the Mount of God, the "bush aflame with God" and yet unconsumed. Moses is to be a prophet of redemption, and here is his prophetic call. On the one hand, it looks back to the past. He who reveals Himself is no new God, but the God of his forefathers. To God they still are living, and His promise to them is waiting for its accomplishment. Indeed the very thought of being "a God unto" Abraham is bound up with the fulfilment of this promise. The new commandment to Moses to lead his people out is in truth the old commandment which Abraham heard, and it rests upon the same promise. But the commandment is new none the less, new for God who must now redeem as well as create, and new for Moses and his people, who must believe in the love and power of their Redeemer, and respond to His call.

Ex. 2¹¹⁻¹⁵, cf. Luke 12¹⁴

Heb. 11¹⁰

Ex. 3⁶

Gen. 17⁷, Matt. 22³², Heb. 11¹⁶

cf. 1 Jn. 2⁷, 8

But how shall faith be awakened, and persist through

the trials to come? The call does not remove Moses' human weakness, and to the people God has become a stranger. God's name is only known as we experience His action. His name is, "I will be that I will be." In Himself He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. But in our knowledge of Him He is more to-day than He was yesterday, and will be more to-morrow. That is what Moses is to say to his people. "Grace to you and peace, from Him which is and which was and which is to come." One day we shall see Him as He is; and He will be no longer to come. "We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, which art and which wast." But that day is not yet. Enough now the present grace which changes the fear "to look upon God" into the desire to see all of Him that can yet be seen.

Now that is Hebrew theism, and Christian also. God is changeless, but not as an idol is changeless; for He is ever-living and ever-working, and the time-process is our revelation of Him. He is changeless by His reliability, by the abiding character of His purpose, by the absence of all limitations which He does not Himself create. Thus the true and noble supernatural is the redemptive action which the purpose of redemption demands; if "signs and wonders" are conceded which have no redemptive power, that is because of the weakness of faith which cannot yet do without them; "except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe." In turning a rod into a serpent there is no more revelation of God than, to use Matthew Arnold's illustration, in turning a pen into a penwiper. Our Lord refused to work such miracles as this. His works of mercy were works of redemptive power. God acting through Moses, like God acting through Christ, proves His power to redeem by actually redeeming; confidence in what He will do rests upon experience of what He has already done. The finger of God is to be recognized,

Ex. 4¹⁰⁻¹²Ex. 3¹³Ex. 3¹⁴ marg.Rev. 1⁴Rev. 11¹⁷cf. Ex. 2⁶
with 33¹⁸James 1^{13, 17}Ex. 4¹⁻⁹John 4⁴⁸Rom. 8³²

not so much in the strangeness of the result produced, as in its character and purpose. What reveals God is not the change of a rod into a serpent, but the change of a slave nation into a free one. This thought of God as revealed by His activity runs through the whole narrative. Evil itself, we learn, has its place in the divine purpose as providing the fullest opportunity for the manifestation of good. "Who is the Lord, that I should hearken unto His voice?"—that is the question which the world will always ask. The divine action must provide the answer to it. It will satisfy all who attend to it—the people of God first, their well-wishers second, and at last the world itself. It is history which reveals God; philosophy can only deal with the data which history provides. Indeed vision itself cannot take the place of fact; we cannot fully trust our vision till we find the promise which it makes beginning to be fulfilled. "Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be the token unto thee that I have sent thee; when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." Visions fade, but facts remain.

Ex. 4^{29, 30} How then does the work of Moses begin? He comes, as the Lord came, preaching the kingdom of God, the good time coming; and his first claim, like the Lord's, is that his people shall accept him as a prophet speaking the Word of God which they must believe and obey. Israel has almost ceased to be the Church of God; but it will be re-created as the Word of God is once more accepted. It must believe "in the Lord, and in his servant Moses," and be ready "to be baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." God asks nothing more yet; for justification is by faith. At first, it seems, the people turn a deaf ear; and, though the "elders" of the people should have been with Moses in the appeal to Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron have to act alone. Thus

Ex. 9¹⁴⁻¹⁶Ex. 5²Ex. 14^{31, 18¹¹, 7⁵}1 Cor. 1¹⁸⁻²¹Ex. 3¹²Ex. 14³¹, cf.
John 14¹ ff
1 Cor. 10²Ex. 6^{9, 4³¹}Ex. 3¹⁸

the story becomes a story of personal conflict between the God-sent prophet and the power which holds the people in bondage, and a story of judgment foretold and executed.

Did not the Lord here see the foreshadowing of His own experience? He too made His appeal to the "weary and heavyladen," and spoke of His "meekness" in doing so; He too offered "rest" in the promised land of the kingdom. But He was not "meek" in His bearing before those who bound the burdens upon men's shoulders, and He foretold the severity of the judgments to fall upon the "spiritual" Egypt of His day. Moreover, as the crisis draws near, the parallels leap to the eye. Moses, like the Lord, declares that his last appeal has been made to the world, and henceforward speaks to his own alone; he institutes the Passover as an Eucharistic feast and solemn memorial of the divine deliverance; he enters with his people into the mystical death of the Red Sea waters, and rises with them on the other side, to be their leader on their journey through the wilderness, and their perpetual intercessor with God. Can we fail to see the Lord foreshadowed, so far as man can do it, in Moses' identification of himself with His people, and refusal to be saved without them, in the love which never spares them in word or abandons them in deed? Can we fail to see in the weariness of Moses under the burden of his people's unbelief the weariness of the Lord Himself? That is divine redemption, as it will always prove to be. God accomplishes it through his servant, but at a heavy cost; and the people must believe and follow, or it will be of no avail.

But then this is only the beginning, for baptism is but the beginning of the life with God. It leads to a wilderness life of probation, where the people of God are supported by supernatural food and drink, and guided and

Matt. 11^{28, 29}Num. 12³Ex. 33¹⁴Luke 11⁴⁶Mark 13⁹Ex. 10²⁹, cf.
Matt. 23³⁹

Ex. 12

Ex. 32³⁰⁻³²,
Num. 14¹¹⁻¹⁹Mark 9¹⁹Ex. 14¹³⁻¹⁵Deut. 8^{2, 3}

Matt. 4⁴, 7, 10 protected by God Himself. So it is that the Lord deals with His own temptations in the wilderness by quotations from Deuteronomy, and that St. Paul can warn the Corinthians by references to Israel's experience. The salvation first attained by divine redemption is a real but probationary salvation, and the faith which finds its expression in the acceptance of baptism must be maintained under other tests, if final salvation is to be won. The presence of God goes ever with Moses, and with his people while they adhere to him; "J" speaks of the pillar of fire, and "E" of the "Angel of the Lord" in whom is God's "name." But the presence is a testing presence, a protection to the faithful, but a burning fire to those who forget the holiness of God.

Ex. 33¹⁴ It is here that we reach the work of Moses in the giving of the law, and that supposed contrast between the law and the Gospel, which we owe to the Pharisees who misunderstood and misused the law. The observance of the law in the story of Exodus is not the condition of God's choice and deliverance of His people; both are "of grace," as Moses himself declares. But, when the people are delivered, they must be brought into a covenant-fellowship with God; and God's claims upon them must be accepted. So the Lord's first call was to faith in His message, and in Himself as the prophet who proclaimed it; but, having proclaimed "the words of grace" He went up "into the mountain," and "his disciples" came unto Him, and He taught them what children of the heavenly Father must be, and the character that was necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. So too when He went up to another mountain, leaving all but three of His followers behind, and God came to Him "in a thick cloud," that the chosen three might hear and "believe" Him "for ever." Who can fail to see that the parallel with Moses is here in view? Moses too was transfigured by the communica-

Deut. 9⁴⁻⁶

Luke 4²²

Matt. 5¹

Matt. 5^{45, 48}

Matt. 5⁹ ff

Ex. 24^{1, 9}

Ex. 19⁹

Ex. 34³⁰

tion of God's glory, and came down from the mountain to find failure among the followers whom he had left behind. Neither in the Old Testament nor in the New Testament is the law, if rightly understood, in any way contrary to the Gospel. Indeed a gospel which did not lead to the fulfilment of "the requirement" of the law could not redeem. God's way is not to lay aside His moral demands, but so to deal with us that we are enabled to fulfil them. Mark 9¹⁸

What then was the character of the law of Sinai? Was it indeed a burden which Israel could not bear? As the Pharisees represented it, it was; and, when the Apostles regard it from the Pharisaic standpoint, they regard it in this way. But the Old Testament never teaches this. When Micah says "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" he speaks in the accents of Moses himself; for the law of Sinai is the law of the Ten Words alone. No doubt there is much in the Pentateuch of a different character—primitive tabus, probably much older than Moses, and primitive legislation similar to that of Hammurabi of Babylon. 2 Cor. 8¹²⁻¹⁸

So again there are rules about religious festivals and sacrificial worship. Religious festivals are occasions of religious and social joy; they are necessary to a historical religion since the facts of redemption are likely to be forgotten without them. But these things formed no part of the law of Sinai. It is true that the narrative of Exodus is here in confusion, and that different theories may be maintained as to what in the earliest story the law of Sinai was. But we are concerned with the narrative as we read it to-day in Exodus and Deuteronomy; and there the law of Sinai is that of the Ten Words only, and these almost certainly without the varying comments attached to them in our two authorities. Micah 6⁸

Deut. 10¹²⁻²²

Deut. 14³ ff

Deut. 5²²

Ex. 20¹⁻¹⁷

Deut. 5⁶⁻²¹

Ex. 20² ffEx. 19⁴⁻⁶,
Deut. 5¹⁵Ex. 31¹³Matt. 5²¹ ffRom. 7⁷ ffDeut. 6²⁴Deut. 30¹¹⁻¹⁴

Was then this law a crushing burden? There are ten "words," not ten "commandments," for our "second commandment" is an expansion of the "first;" and the true first word is a word of grace: "I am the Lord thy God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." On this the nine commandments depend: they are addressed to a redeemed people. Was it a crushing burden to be faithful to such a God, and to reverence His name? Did the other seven go one whit beyond those simple forms of mercy and justice without which no society can continue to exist? In the purpose of God the Sabbath, whatever its origin, was made for man. If it is God's mark set upon His people's life, it is in its wisdom and mercy a characteristic mark. No doubt, if we regarded our Lord's commentary in the Sermon on the Mount as His explanation of what these commandments meant, the burden to a people just up from slavery would have indeed been overwhelming; but our Lord is not there explaining but superseding them. No doubt also, if we understood the last commandment as St. Paul understood it, the burden would again have been overwhelming; and it may well be that it was divinely intended one day to awaken the sense of sin by being so understood. But in its original meaning it was a help to the observance of earlier commands, warning against desires which might lead to their transgression. Thus the witness of Deuteronomy is entirely true. "The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes . . . for our good always." "This commandment which I command thee this day it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart that thou mayest do it." God asked little of His people at this stage of their training because it was little that they could give; though He asks much now, because the gift of the

Spirit enables much to be given. But what He asked it was necessary that they should give, if His promise was to be fulfilled. Moreover, if we read the narrative with care, we shall see that everywhere the chief claim of God is for faith, and not for meticulous obedience to a code. The judgments recorded are chiefly for want of faith, and trust, and loyalty to God the Redeemer. Above all is this true of the greatest of them, the death of almost all who came out of Egypt before the promised land was reached; "they were not able to enter in because of unbelief." One reason why the Church to-day neglects the Old Testament is that the Pharisees are credited with having rightly understood it. St. Paul contends that the Old Testament is on his side. When, for example, he refuses to accept the developed system of the law as the means of justification, or even as the basis of Christian morality, he has the Old Testament with him—obviously in the first case, and really in the second. The nine commandments of Sinai, as we have seen, rest upon the fact of redemption and the obligations which redemption brings; when a greater redemption has taken place, the obligations of the redeemed must rest upon that.

Heb. 3¹⁹, cf.
Ps. 78¹⁹⁻²², 32

Rom. 12¹ ff

We pass now to the final aspect of the work of Moses, the building of the polity of the Jewish Church. Here too he is the forerunner of the Lord both in what he does, and in what he does not do. The great principles are apparent from the first, but the polity itself is left to be a gradual growth.

We observe first that Moses no more than the Lord was the Creator of a new Church. He found Israel the people of God already, and he built it anew on the rock of believing men. As we have seen, much of the law was probably older than his day. The covenant-sacrifice at Sinai followed the existing rules; and even the Passover was but an adaptation of older forms of

Ex. 24⁵ ff

- Ex. 4²⁹ sacrifice. So again the "elders" of Israel were found,
 Num. 11¹⁶ ff not created, though Moses bestowed upon them new
 powers and a share in the Spirit which rested on himself.
 Jer. 7²¹ ff, cf. When Jeremiah, though himself a priest, denies that the
 Hos. 6⁶ message of Moses was concerned with material sacrifices,
 he probably means that they were older than Moses,
 the common inheritance of Israel and other peoples,
 and far less important than those great principles of
 justice and mercy and true religion for which Moses
 stood. Our Lord's method was the same. He took the
 ceremonial law as He found it, and attended the Temple
 worship. His Eucharist is a transformed Passover, in
 which we ever renew our covenant-relation to God, and
 find in the "blood of sprinkling," the Lord's life given
 for us and imparted to us, our salvation from the
 approaching judgment. If there are "elders," or
 "presbyters" in the Church of Christ, it is because
 there were elders in the old Church, and its organization
 was adopted and transformed for the new.
- Heb. 12²⁴
- Eph. 2¹² How then did "the commonwealth of Israel" after
 the time of Moses differ from what it had been before
 him? The law of Israel, as we read it to-day, is the
 result of a long process, which did not reach its term
 till some while after the Exile; and criticism has not
 solved all the problems which it presents. But Moses
 himself is represented as giving decisions upon questions
 as they arose; and the constitution of Israel as gradually
 formed, like that of the Christian Church, under the
 pressure of immediate needs. What is important is the
 position of Israel as the kingdom, not of man, but of God.
 Ideally there is no earthly king; the One Judge,
 Lawgiver and King is out of sight; but in Moses and
 Aaron, the prophet and the priest, He finds His two
 necessary representatives—the prophet to speak by
 His Word and proclaim His will, and the priest to
 preserve, interpret, and apply the prophetic teaching,
- Mark 1⁴⁴, cf.
 11¹⁶
- Lev. 24¹⁰ ff,
 Num. 9⁶ ff,
 15³² ff
- Isa. 33²²

and by his ministry maintain, and restore when broken, the relation of the people to God. No doubt the time came when an earthly king arose; and in Deuteronomy he is recognized. But even there he is the creation of the people rather than of God, though it is for God to appoint him; and he must obtain from the priests a copy of the law, and rule in accordance with it. Moreover, when a prophet arises to deal with a new situation, it is for the king to obey the prophet, and not the prophet the king. Israel, like the Church to-day, is not a democratic, or an oligarchical, or a monarchical state; such states, as Aristotle saw, are continually changing their forms of government, since all are found equally unsatisfying. The constitution of Israel is theocratic; the Lord its God is its King. Deut. 17¹⁴⁻²⁰

But can we accept the story of the Pentateuch even so far as this? It is the Jewish priesthood to which we owe, if not the whole, at any rate a great part of it; is not "Aaron the Levite" far more prominent than he ought to be? J, the oldest story, seems to make little of Aaron, and it is Moses who performs the priestly ministry at the covenant-sacrifice. Moreover, though the history of the priesthood is obscure, what we read of worship in the historical books is often inconsistent with the Pentateuchal law. Are not then Aaron, and later Eleazar, ideal figures who according to later theory should have existed, but in fact did not? Ex. 4¹⁴
Ex. 24⁶ ff

Here again we have a problem of no practical importance. Like the Lord and the Apostles, we are concerned with the story as we find it, and the constitution of the people of God as it came to be. Moses himself belonged to the tribe of Levi; and probably this tribe, whether mediately through Aaron or not, obtained its position by its connection with Moses himself. Be this as it may, prophecy and priesthood alike go back to Moses; and in the story as we read it we can see both

the abiding difference and the abiding connection between the one and the other. The priest and the prophet are not characters in a melodrama, the one always cast as the villain, and the other as the hero of the piece. The Bible has more to say about false prophecy than about false priesthood; and generally the prophet and the priest stand or fall together. In the purpose of God they are brothers always, like Moses and Aaron; the kingdom of God requires them both.

Jer. 14¹⁵ ff,
23¹⁸ ff, 28⁵ ff,
Zech. 13²⁻⁵,
Ezek. 13,
Micah 3^{5, 8},
Jer. 5^{30, 31},
6¹³,
Zeph. 3⁴, Isa.
28⁷

Now we see in Moses the ideal prophet, one so intimate with God that God speaks to him "mouth to mouth even manifestly, and not in dark speeches." There is wonderful beauty in the account given to us—God day by day in "the tent of meeting" speaking to Moses "as a man speaketh unto his friend," the knowledge and grace already bestowed leading to prayer for more knowledge and more grace, and that for Israel's sake as well as for his own. The religion of the prophet is "first-hand religion," and his message a message bestowed by God Himself. It may not be altogether new; true prophecy is always accordant with the divine teaching of the past, and the prophet regards himself as one who appeals to the better standards of earlier days. But the truth which he declares is never but a truth received from other men; it has been brought home to him in connection with his own experience or with that of his people, and he speaks it with a "numinous" authority which does not belong to the priest. The prophet is hardly ever a systematic teacher; our Lord Himself was not that. But he recognizes with God-given insight the truth which at the moment is most needed, and the action which it demands; and he enables others, if their ears are open to the Word of God, to recognize it with Him. Moses is the first of the prophets, not only in his proclamation of the coming

Num. 12⁶⁻⁸

Ex. 33⁷⁻¹³

Deut. 13¹⁻⁵

redemption, but all through the wilderness life till he passes from our sight. It is God who rules, but it is through His servant that He does so ; he that receives the one receives the other.

But what of the priest ? He also is a " messenger of the Lord of Hosts," but a messenger of a different kind. He is not only the offerer of sacrifice and the minister of benediction ; he is the regular instructor of the people of God in all parts of their duty towards Him ; he is the recorder, the guardian, and transmitter of the divine teaching, whatever the subject with which it deals. So the " Song of Moses " describes the priests. " They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law : they shall put incense before thee and whole burnt-offerings upon thine altar." It is a disastrous blunder to suppose that the office of the priest is merely to offer sacrifice. His teaching office is of the first importance ; and woe to him, as Malachi says, if he neglects or is incompetent for the harder duty, and satisfied with performing the easier. The priest is the guardian of the great tradition of the past. He does not, like the prophet say, " Thus saith the Lord " ; he says, " as the Lord commanded Moses." But he is as necessary as the prophet himself. Prophecy is too intermittent, too fragmentary, often too wanting in balance, to do the work of priesthood. Its work in the ordered polity of the Church both before and after the coming of the Lord is not to supersede, but to purify, to deepen, to enlarge and enrich the traditional teaching ; and it is only when the priest and the prophet maintain their " brotherly covenant " that the work of either can be rightly done. It is to their union and co-operation that we owe the Old Testament. Had there been no prophecy we should not care to read the story of Israel ; had there been no priesthood, there would be no story to read. In the Lord the two streams which go out from Moses

Mal. 2⁷

Num. 6²² ff

Deut. 17⁸⁻¹³,

31⁹⁻¹³, cf.

Test. Lev. 18

Deut. 33¹⁰

Mal. 21⁻⁹

cf. Hos. 4⁶⁻¹⁰

will meet again. He will so reproduce all that is best in the living tradition of the past that it will be possible to argue that there is nothing original in what He says ; and yet in His mouth it will come with such new power and authority that He will seem to say nothing that is not original. Then the stream will again divide. In the Catholic Church prophecy will never die, though there will be times when there is " no open vision." But a consecrated priesthood there will always be, charged, not only with a ministry of reconciliation and worship, but with the duty of transmitting the teaching of the Lord. When the task grows too heavy for those entrusted with it, or must soon be laid down, God will " take of the spirit " that rests upon His servants and " put it upon " others, that, when He " buries His workers," He may " carry on His work."

Num. 11¹⁷

We see then how the law is full of Christ, and ever speaks of better things to come. Shall we rest satisfied with this, or shall we, like our forefathers, find the Lord in small things as well as great ? Surely, wherever God is manifested to men, we shall expect to find the Lord. There is that " root out of a dry ground " burning with the presence of God, and yet unconsumed. There is the Paschal Lamb without blemish, of which no bone must be broken, slain by the whole congregation of Israel, and to be eaten only by pilgrims with their loins girded and shoes on their feet. There is the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, going before the flock of God, and leading them out. There is the angel of the Lord, the abiding protection of the people of God, their guide to the place prepared for them, in whom is " the name " of God Himself. There is the manna, the bread from heaven which never fails till the promised land is reached ; there is the smitten rock from which the water flows. There is the serpent of brass, the plague exhibited as conquered and dead, lifted up on the tree

Ex. 3²

Ex. 12⁵⁻¹⁴

Ex. 13²²

Ex. 14¹⁹

Ex. 16¹⁴⁻¹⁹

Ex. 17⁶

Num. 21²

that all may look and live. There is the ark of the covenant of the Lord, over which the divine presence is manifested, and which contains within it law and priesthood and heavenly food ; and it goes before the people “ three days’ journey to seek out a resting-place for them.” When the modern commentator tries to explain St. Paul’s statement that the Lord was “ raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,” he generally refers to the words of Hosea. But that reference is but one out of a multitude. The very first chapter of the Bible speaks of the world as rising out of the waters on the third day, and a Concordance will show that the third day never loses its significance in the Scripture story.

Ex. 25¹⁶⁻²²,
 Num. 17¹⁰,
 Ex. 16³³ all
 as explained
 by Heb. 9⁴
 Num. 10³³

Hos. 6²

CHAPTER VI

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

THERE is a change when we pass from the story of the Pentateuch. Joshua indeed goes rather with the books which precede than with those which follow it: just because the ideal element is there so great, it lends itself to spiritual interpretation. But, as we reach more historical ground, the religious interest seems to decrease. The ordinary church-goer is not as conscious of this as the systematic student, since the "lessons" which he hears are taken from the chapters most directly edifying. But were he to read the historical books in their entirety, though he would find much to interest him, he would often ask himself what they had to do with religion.

Have then these books little to teach us? On the contrary, they suggest profound lessons, though of a different character from those already considered. Here, as in the Pentateuch, narratives have been combined written from different points of view; and they enable us to look at the facts from different angles. Broadly speaking, we find narratives of three kinds. First, there are those which are little more than records of facts, and might almost have been written by a heathen chronicler. Secondly, there are those which are written from the prophetic standpoint; indeed, the scribes spoke of Joshua, Judges, and the books of Samuel and Kings as the "Former Prophets." The writers here are primarily religious teachers. The facts which they record are selected facts; and they regard both the facts and the characters of their story from their

own religious point of view. Omri from the standpoint of the world was one of the greatest of the kings of Israel ; yet hardly anything is told us about him. Jehu, on the other hand, was both a brutal ruffian, and a disastrous king from the standpoint of the world ; he lost to Syria the whole territory of the Trans-Jordanic tribes. Yet because he destroyed the Baal worshippers, the historian, unlike Hosea, seems to regard him as a hero. Thirdly, there are narratives which are not history, but stories framed to be vehicles of religious instruction. It is here that the lesson is generally most obvious, though not, we must add, most trustworthy. " God does not make up His accounts every Saturday night " ; if righteousness paid a hundred per cent as promptly as these cautionary tales suggest, it would be little more than enlightened selfishness. That in fact it does not so pay, the people of God came in time to see, as the book of Job makes clear ; and it is far better to recognize that God " maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust ", than to set experience at nought by maintaining that bad harvests are always a sign of His special displeasure. Events of this kind can be interpreted in more ways than one, as Jeremiah found.

2 Kings 10

2 Kings 10³²⁻³³

Hos. 14

Matt. 5⁴⁵, cf.
Luke 13¹⁻⁵Jer. 44¹⁵⁻¹⁸

Now the combination of these three forms of narrative, though it sometimes occasions incoherence and inconsistency, is most valuable. The revelation of God is given in facts ; but not in facts apart from their interpretation. It is not generally God's way to force Himself upon our attention ; and, if the Spirit of God does not open our eyes, facts may be to us facts and nothing more. But it is also not God's way, in dealing with the people of His choice, to leave facts to speak for themselves. He inspires His servants the prophets to see more or less clearly the revelation which the facts contain, and to declare it to others. The very selectiveness of pro-

phetic history, which at first awakens our suspicion, is its outstanding merit ; the prophets see what is important, and what is not. Moreover, in the Bible the Church has preserved for us not only prophetic history and prophetic commentary interwoven with it, but the words of the greatest of the prophets in the books which bear their names ; and we must read them with the history, if we desire fully to understand it. Nor ought we to despise even the ideal history of the later writers. Just because the priest or scribe is the guardian of tradition he always tends to idealize the past ; and the prophet sometimes does the same. But their view of it may represent, not merely what they think must have been ; but what ought to have been, and would have been, had man rightly responded to the call of God.

Jer. 21-3

Jer. 13¹¹

cf. Zech 8²²⁻²³

What then broadly is the story which these books present ? It is the story of a people singled out by God to be by their character and experience the medium of His revelation to the world. "As the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord, that they might be unto Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory : but they would not hear." Israel was intended to stand out against the dark background of the world as a people of supernatural blessedness, and so to attract all other nations to that God from whom it came. All this, as we have seen, appears in the call to Abraham. But, if the purpose was to be fulfilled, two things were necessary, the distinctness of Israel from all other nations, and its obedience to the Word of God. Jehovah is a holy God, who will by no means clear the guilty ; His blessing cannot be given to a disobedient and gainsaying people ; if Israel "will not hear," the only revelation of God which it can afford is the revelation of His righteous judgment. But even when judgment falls, God's

original purpose is not laid aside. The judgment is intended to bring His people to repentance; and, failing that, to destroy the impenitent many, while leaving "a remnant" to be the nucleus of a new Israel. That is what the great prophets teach; and their teaching has been vindicated by the history, not only of the old Israel, but of that new Israel, the Church Catholic, which grew out of the old and inherited its mission. The gates of death never prevail against the Church; but they often prevail against the greater part of it, and leave but a remnant behind.

1 Kings 19¹⁸
Isa. 10^{21, 22}

Matt. 16¹⁸

It is commonly said that Israel before the Exile was a nation, and after it a Church, the apparent implication being that Israel before the Exile neither was a Church, nor ought to have been one. It is on this view that lessons are drawn from the teaching of the prophets for the right ordering of our own national life. The most ardent believer in the Church can approve of this use of the Old Testament. Before the Lord had come, and the Spirit been given, the life of Israel could not rise to the standard required of the Church to-day, and it may be rightly urged that the life of such a kingdom of the world as our own, in view of all our advantages, ought to be at least as high as that required of the old Israel. But the fact remains that Israel, not only in the divine purpose, but by the divine call given to it, never was just a kingdom of the world, but from the first the Church of God. From the first, there was a standard of life set before it definitely higher than that set before other peoples; and when Israel rejected it, it sinned as other peoples did not.

Now modern criticism may sometimes obscure this. It may suggest that, in spite of the work of Moses, the standards of Israel were, till the rise of the great prophets, the same as those of the surrounding nations alike in doctrine, morals, government, and worship; it may

assume that laws set aside in practice were necessarily unknown; and regard the prophets from Amos onwards as the medium of a revelation almost entirely new. This view attracts us, since it falls in with our theories of evolutionary progress; but it is quite inconsistent with fact. Progress in religion and morality does not follow a steadily ascending line. Great teachers bring about great advances, and then declension follows. No doubt we sometimes find in the Old Testament the practice of the past condemned by reference to later standards. But we must not suppose that the practice of men always corresponds to the standards which they recognize, or that standards which have once been recognized are never forgotten. If this were so, the Higher Criticism of the fortieth century might deny that the New Testament existed in our own day, the practice of "the best people" in the twentieth century clearly proving that Christian standards had yet to be revealed. Changes did take place in the standards recognized by Israel from time to time; sometimes we find advance, and sometimes declension, and sometimes it is hard to say whether or no the change is for the better. But the Old Testament prophets do not regard themselves as innovators, or their hearers as scholars recently promoted to a higher class. They regard themselves as charged to recall Israel to "the old paths," to old standards set aside or forgotten; and their hearers not as merely ignorant, but as disobedient.

Jer. 6¹⁶, cf.
18¹⁵, Isa. 8²⁰

cf. Am. 3²

We should then put ourselves to school with the Old Testament, confident that the standpoint of the writers is substantially justified; and that, when Israel sinks to the level of the surrounding peoples, it is without excuse. That this is what it frequently did is obvious; and the value of the story for ourselves lies in the fact that it anticipates the history of the Catholic Church, shows how declension arises, and what its results must be. Israel

has its Dark Ages described in the book of Judges, and its Middle Ages in the books of Samuel and Kings ; that is why the historical books remind us of monastic chronicles. It has its Great Schism, its " visible head," and its unsatisfying " Reformation." It experiences the break-up of its corporate institutional life, and the partial restoration of it in a narrower and more legalistic form. Its visible unity, though never forgotten as an ideal, is shattered into fragments ; and its " Dispersion " becomes at least as important for the fulfilment of God's purpose as its more close-knit centre. Everywhere we see in new and startling ways that " these things happened unto " Israel " by way of example, and they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come." But the Old Testament shows us more than this. It shows that our God is the only God who could be of use to us—one whose patience and resource are alike inexhaustible. "*Deus patiens*"—we cannot quote the words too often—" *quia aeternus est, quia fortis est, quia Deus est* " ; and for the Church to-day there is hope, if we read the Old Testament with eyes to see, and wills to obey.

Isa. 11¹¹⁻¹³,
Ezek. 37¹⁵⁻²²

1 Cor. 10¹¹

The first thing necessary was the separation of Israel from the world. Did God fail to do His part to insure this ? The Exodus created the separation ; the law made it ethical as well as physical ; the position of the Holy Land made its maintenance possible. But was the separation ever a fact after the entry into Palestine ? The early chapters of Joshua regard it as having been so. The conquest of the country is described as rapidly effected by the divine power, the original inhabitants as put to the sword, and the whole land as carefully divided among the tribes. But we have only to turn to the book of Judges to see how different was the reality. The conquest of the country was for long most imperfect ; Jerusalem was a Canaanite stronghold till the time of Jos. 15⁶³

Judges 5

David; and Judah was for long divided from the Joseph tribes by a string of Canaanite fortresses. Thus the Song of Deborah, perhaps the oldest document of the Old Testament, has nothing to say about Judah and Simeon. They receive neither the blessing of Zebulun, nor the curse of Meroz. Moreover, the Philistines had come over from Caphtor or Crete near the time of the Exodus, and occupied the maritime plain, a blessing under a somewhat heavy disguise. When the armies of the great empires appeared, they could advance to find one another by the coast without concerning themselves with Jerusalem or Samaria. Thus Palestine in the early days of Israel's occupation was much like Macedonia to-day. Israelite, Canaanite, Hittite, and Philistine settlements existed side by side. Samson could take a wife from the Philistines, and David raise his guardsmen from the Philistine clans.

cf. Ezek. 16³

Judges 14

2 Sam. 8¹⁸Jos. 3² ffJos. 5²⁻⁹Jos. 3¹⁰, 17Jos. 5¹³, 14

Jos. 6

Jos. 7⁴ ffJos. 8¹ ff

Jos. 9

May we then, retaining Joshua xiii-xxii as a useful handbook of later geography, tear up the rest of the book? On the contrary, its ideal picture is of high value. The actual facts did not correspond to the Divine intention, and the book tells us how it might have been realized. The ark of the covenant goes first to show the way, which is as yet unknown; the people are reconsecrated and circumcised; the divine power is put forth upon Jordan as before upon the Red Sea waters. Above all the "Angel of the Lord," the old guide of God's people, is welcomed, not as an ally, but as the captain of the Lord's host, and the capture of Jericho takes place by the obedience of faith to the Word of God. So again we see the divine blessing lost by disobedience inspired by hope of personal gain, and restored when the evil has been taken away; and the trouble occasioned by alliance with the heathen, without waiting for the divine guidance. If the book of Joshua approves the massacre of the old population,

there is nothing necessarily in this to shock us. No doubt, a Church filled by the Spirit should be the champion of native populations everywhere, for it is able to uplift them. But Israel at this stage had no such power; association with the Canaanites meant falling to their level. It does not degrade to hold temporary office as the executioner of God, if the office is not only burdensome but unpaid. But it degrades immeasurably to massacre the savage braves of an inferior people, and then loot their cities, reduce their wives to concubinage, and their children to slavery or forced labour. Jos. 6^{18, 19}

We see then that at first Israel in Palestine was not a nation apart. It had to become so by a long discipline, which a right response to God might have made unnecessary; and, only when it corresponded to God's purpose, could its mission be fulfilled. So it will be throughout the long history of the people of God. God's purpose stands sure, but we cannot know the hour of its fulfilment. The kingdom will ever be "at hand"—God seems pledged not only to give it, but to give it before this generation passes away; the appeal is always, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice." But the fulfilment of the promise ever recedes, because human faith so little responds to it. The day and the hour no one knows but the Father, since our use of our freedom is incalculable. Mark 1¹⁵
Ps. 95⁷, Heb. 3⁷⁻¹⁹
Mark 13³²

What then was Israel's actual history? The book of Judges shows Israel at first fighting for its life, with continual alternations of faithlessness and repentance, disaster and recovery. We have no history that we can trust for details; the historical framework is artificial, and some of the Judges may have been contemporaries. But God the invisible King raises up prophets and deliverers as they are needed, and sometimes, as with Deborah and Samuel, we can hardly distinguish the

one from the other. Meanwhile, apart from the Philistines on the maritime plain, some sort of unity is gradually attained, while there is much amalgamation of Israel with the older inhabitants. Shall we say that the world entered the Church, or that the Church was lost in the world? The question is as hard to answer as it will be in the days of Constantine; we can put it which way we will. But the practical consequences are obvious. What we see is a Church secularized, and no longer corresponding to the divine purpose. God does all that can be done, short of withdrawing His gift of freedom. He sends prophet after prophet, "rising up early and sending them"; the slightest response is sure of His blessing. But Israel as a whole "will not hear"; and at last, when every effort to save it has been exhausted, goes down for a time in darkness and blood. The incorporation into Israel of heathen who brought their heathenism with them meant corruption alike in theology, morals, worship, and government, as it did later in the Christian Church.

Let us take government first. There declension appears early. Israel should have been governed by the Word of God. God should have been its King, ruling in part by His Torah, or instruction, given in the past, and in part, whenever further guidance was necessary, by the prophets whom He raised up. Judges, or vindicators, of God's people might no doubt be temporarily needed, and, if they were, God would provide them; but not earthly kings, who would obscure the position of God Himself. This however is no practical polity for a secularized Church. Obedience to the Torah is troublesome; the recognition of the true prophet requires spiritual insight; and obedience to his message asks more than men will give. What a secularized Church requires is an abiding visible head—"make us a king to judge us like all the nations." If there is to

Jer. 7²⁵

1 Sam 8⁵

be unity, it must have a visible centre of unity ; if it is to know how to act, it must have some one always available to give the word of command. It is here that we see the value of the story of the rise of the Jewish monarchy. That it is a composite story is actually an advantage ; neither a writer who approved of the Jewish monarchy, nor one who disapproved of it, would by himself have made the truth so clear.

Two views are found side by side. According to the one, the monarchy arose out of the needs of the time, and had full prophetic sanction ; according to the other, the demand for a king was an act of apostasy, since it was inconsistent with the crown rights of God Himself. So, according to this account, says Samuel ; and not only Samuel, but Gideon, and apparently Hosea also. A theologian would here distinguish between God's " antecedent " and His " consequent " will. He would say that antecedently God desired His people to have no visible head ; but that, being what they had come to be, it was best for them to have one. He would take a similar view of the Great Schism under Jeroboam. The loss of visible unity was contrary to the divine ideal ; it turned the hands of God's people against one another ; and, until the evil was abolished through common disaster, God's purpose for them could not be fulfilled. But " the thing " was none the less " of the Lord," since it was the best which human sin allowed ; it deprived neither section of Israel of their relation to God as His people. He continued to send His prophets to both, and both had their contributions to make to law, prophecy, and psalmody alike.

We must not however expect Hebrew compilers to be capable of such cross-bench views as these ; it is enough that their narratives enable us to understand the situation. God follows His people on the path which they have chosen for themselves, and makes

1 Sam. 12¹².
Judg. 8²⁸,
Hos. 8⁴

1 Kings 12²⁴

even their unfaithfulness to "turn to His praise," just as He will do when similar events take place in the story of the Christian Church. In the secularized Church of the centuries after Constantine the rise of the Papacy, though it was powerless to bestow the spiritual unity for which the Lord prayed, gave for the time to the West a unity far better than none; and St. Leo and Hildebrand were as truly God's gifts to His people as David and Hezekiah. But the worldliness, the luxury, and rapacity of many of the Popes were just as much fulfilments of Samuel's words of warning as those of Solomon and Rehoboam, and just as much contributory causes to the disruption which followed. Indeed it was because the Popes had become secular rulers with ambitions of their own that they could not rebuke the selfish nationalism of the rulers of the newly consolidated European peoples. Neither before nor after the coming of the Lord did God because of this unfaithfulness altogether refuse His guidance to His Church. Neither Kings nor Popes interfere with it, if they rule in accordance with the traditional law, and the teaching of the prophets who are sent to them; and by the side of all the kings of the Bible story whose rule is fruitful in blessing we find prophets whose guidance they accept. But from the days of Solomon onwards the forebodings of Samuel were only too completely justified. The kings of the people of God were generally all too similar to the kings of the nations around them. Such examples of the deterioration wrought by the possession of despotic power as we find in David, Solomon, and Ahab do not prove that the standards of Israel were no higher than those of the nations round. The disgust of Jezebel at the scruples of her husband shows clearly that in Israel the rights of the king were limited, as they were not elsewhere; and in Israel there were both prophets to denounce

1 Sam. 8¹⁰⁻¹⁸

1 Kings 21⁷

the crimes of David and Ahab and a God to punish them. When Nathan said that the Lord had put away David's sin, he only meant that the death penalty would not be inflicted; and the rest of David's reign was heavily overclouded. But, though the prophets regard God still as Israel's King, they hardly regard Israel as still His kingdom. It ought to have been so, and one day would be so again; but the rule and blessing of God had for the present been forfeited.

It is not, however, chiefly in the polity of Israel that we see the consequences of association with the heathen; but in the corruption of doctrine, morals, and worship, to which the whole story bears witness. What is fundamental for religion is a real monotheism, and a true conception of the divine character; and the peoples of Canaan possessed neither. It matters comparatively little by what name God is called. Baal, for example, only means "Lord," and Melech or Moloch only means "King." When God's people called Him by these names, no apostasy was necessarily involved. Nor did it greatly matter if heathen gods were regarded as realities, provided that Israel had nothing to do with them, and recognized that Jehovah's power was altogether superior to theirs. What mattered was the recognition that Jehovah, Israel's Lord, was "one Lord," and the God of righteousness and love. Now the Baals and Ashtarts of Canaan were many; and they were but male and female nature-powers, concerned with the bestowal of fertility upon man, and beast, and soil. The danger was that, when Israel became an agricultural people, its own transcendent God would be identified with the local Baals, or the worship of the Baals and Ashtarts substituted for His, from fear that otherwise fields, cattle, and wives would alike be barren.

Now religion imperatively demands simplicity in its object. A god who is one among many is no God; as

2 Sam. 12¹³

Ps. 95³

Judg. 2¹¹⁻¹⁴

Mart Pol. 9

St. Polycarp said, polytheists are atheists. We cannot fully trust God, if we regard His power as limited by that of other beings ; nor are we likely to obey Him, if we think that we can be protected by some one else from the consequences of His wrath. Equally imperatively does true religion demand in its object moral worth ; and nature-gods do not possess it. In Palestine, as in India to-day, prostitutes were attached to the local shrines ; and nature-worship had no protest to make against the buying and selling of justice, or the grossest oppression of the poor. It will always be so with nature-worship, however subtle the philosophy by which it is defended ; pantheism and polytheism are in their moral consequences on the same level. There are those to-day who desire a religion, not merely consistent with scientific knowledge, but founded upon it as the one secure foundation. Such a religion can offer no basis for conduct. Nature by itself no more declares to us the need for justice, mercy, and chastity than it did to the Canaanites ; it conceals God almost as much as it reveals Him. The immanent God of nature is " the God of things as they are," and apparently little concerned with what they ought to be. No doubt, when the character of God is otherwise known, it is right, not only to claim for Him the sphere of nature as well as of grace, but to allow our new knowledge of nature to widen and deepen our conception of Him ; but the knowledge of God's character must be brought to nature, since it cannot be found there. Nature, as St. Paul says, reveals God's everlasting power and divinity ; but nothing more.

Rom. 1²⁰Judges 5^a

We see then that, when the prophets thunder against " new gods," they go to the root of the matter, and are concerned for morality as well as for religion. The nature gods and goddesses were lords or owners of the soil ; not lords of their worshippers, profoundly con-

cerned, like Jehovah, with their conduct. The prophets do not expect their people to "serve God for naught"; nor do they as a body object to sacrificial worship. Israel worshipped Jehovah much as Moab and Ammon worshipped Chemosh and Milcom; it is not certain that images of Jehovah were at first forbidden. Even to-day Catholic worship often differs little in externals from that found in heathen temples. Festivals and offerings, incense and lights and vestments, are neither Christian nor heathen, but simply human. The language of symbolism is a universal language; we all naturally express our reverence and joy in God's presence in similar ways; and God our Father, if our hearts are right with Him, welcomes the best that His children can give. What matters, as the prophets knew, is not so much how we worship as what we worship. Are we worshipping in our God not merely power, but love and righteousness, and so understanding what we must be for our worship to be welcome to Him? If we are not, what is our worship worth?

Indeed, if we must choose between sacrifice and obedience, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." It is right to give to God in homage, in thankfulness, and after repentance in expiation of sin; and the Church, as Ezekiel and Malachi will teach us, ought to witness to God before the world by a noble and uplifting worship. But to give is the act of a friend; and the disobedient heart will corrupt sacrifice, as it corrupts all else; it will regard it as an *opus operatum* of the priest, effectual in proportion to its amount and value, and not to the penitence and faith which it is meant to express. When sacrifice is hopelessly corrupted, and men think that thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil are an acceptable substitute for doing justly and loving mercy and walking humbly with God, there is only one

1 Sam. 15²²

Ezek. 40-48,
Mal. 1⁶⁻¹⁴

Micah 6⁸⁻⁸

thing to do with sacrifice ; it must be abolished, till the true view of it can be restored. If we must choose between rich worship with low conceptions of God, and bare worship with high conceptions, we must choose the latter every time. Jeremiah seems to have taken no interest in Josiah's Reformation. It was well intended, though perhaps in part inspired by political motives ; the parallel which it presents to the Reformation of the sixteenth century is very instructive. But it could have no lasting results, since it was imposed with a high hand upon an unwilling people, and corruption had gone too far for disaster to be avoidable. Of what use was it to desecrate the shrines of northern Israel, and centralize worship at Jerusalem, when the traditions of worship there were no better than elsewhere, and the hearts of the people were unchanged ? It cost men no more then to break down carved work with axes and hammers than it cost them to do it in England and the Low Countries in the sixteenth century ; and the moral reformation chiefly necessary they would not make. The corrupt people of God preferred false gods, precisely because they made no moral demands, while Jehovah made demands that they were not willing to accept. God's only course was to destroy Jerusalem and its temple, as well as Bethel, and to send the people into retreat at Babylon to learn there from Jeremiah and Ezekiel what true religion means.

It is profoundly unwelcome to be obliged to admit that the Church from Constantine onwards has been largely blind to these lessons of the Old Testament ; but the admission must be made. The amalgamation of the Church with the world brought far more than a change in its polity and the loss of its unity ; it brought, as in Israel, a corruption of religion, morals, and worship. The heathen who poured into the church brought their heathenism with them, and it has never been expelled

to this day. Let us do the Church justice. It continued to preach Christ and His gospel, and to raise the moral standard in many ways. It was not wrong to tolerate for a time much which fell short of the mind of Christ ; nor was it wrong to attempt to Christianize the festivals and social customs of the heathen instead of abolishing them. We do this in Africa to-day. But it was altogether wrong to tolerate practical polytheism, to accept a twofold standard of morality, one for the saints and one for ordinary Christians, and to relax moral discipline because the heathen would not endure it. If men enter the Church on their own terms, they will remain in it on their own terms, and bring down the Church's standards to those they are willing to accept. The Church in East and West was from Constantine onwards strict about doctrinal orthodoxy ; that costs little to those who accept beliefs at the word of command. But it was strict about little else. Not only did practical polytheism become rampant, the saints and martyrs taking the place of the gods and goddesses and heroes of Paganism, and blessings being asked directly from them, just as they are asked from God ; but "our Lady," the heir to the devotion lavished in heathendom on all the Mother-goddesses and Queens of heaven, took her place by "our Lord" very much as the Ash-tarts of Canaan had taken theirs by the side of the Baals. The heathen had always had a feminine object of worship, and they insisted upon having one still.* In theory, no doubt, the Church insisted upon the infinite distance between God and the very highest of His creatures, and explained that the saints helped us only by their prayers. But that made little practical difference. The majesty of God may in itself be infinite. But both the conceptions that we form of Him, and

* The earlier reverence for Mary is of a different character. It rests upon our debt to her for the self-surrender which made the Incarnation possible.

the trust that we repose in Him, are far from infinite ; and, if we give what we have to give to another, we can make no difference between our attitude to that other and our attitude to God. When the paganized Church had to meet the onset of Islam, it fell ; and partly because Islam had the strength which monotheism brings, while the Church had lost it.

Moreover, it is not possible to doubt that still, as of old, the attractiveness of "other gods" lies largely in the belief that they are less exacting in their moral demands than God Himself, and a welcome refuge from His supposed severity. Even among Protestants what Hort called "Jesus-worship" has often the same character. It is the worship of the Lord, not as one with the Father in His character and claims as well as in His Eternal Being, but as a welcome refuge from Him. The nature of His mediation is misunderstood ; it is not recognized that, if the Lord brings us to the Father, it is by enabling us to meet His claims, and not by enabling us to escape them.

So once more with the Church's sacrificial worship. There was not much wrong with the authoritative teaching of the Church either in East or West. But through the influx of heathenism the practical system, and what was "commonly said" in defence of it, were altogether different from the authoritative teaching ; and the Reformers of the sixteenth century were fully justified in their attack upon them. The popular teaching and practice rested upon the heathen conception of the meaning and effect of sacrifice ; and attached the same kind of value to the number of masses said as Israel had attached to the multitude of sacrifices offered. What Protestants call the corruptions of Romanism have often no special connection with Rome. They are the result of the amalgamation of the Church with the world ; and neither the Lutheran nor

the English Reformation went anywhere near the root of the evil, though the Calvinistic tried to do so. While human nature is what it is, the identification of the Church with the population as a whole will always mean the corruption of the Church more than the uplifting of the nation: and a corrupt Church cannot fulfil the divine purpose.

The centuries between the Exile and the coming of the Lord were extremely important both for the Church and for the Bible. The providence of God had provided for the safety of all the sounder part of the nation; and, had the prophetic word been followed, much of the rest might have been preserved with it. Babylon was a humaner power than Assyria; and the seventy years penance of the people of God was invaluable in fitting them for their future work. In the new Israel after the return the old heathenism was almost dead; and when in the worst days of the Seleucid domination the temptation "to be as the heathen" appeared again, the faithfulness of Israel's martyrs was magnificent. But the history both of the rebuilding of the Church and of the gradual formation of the Old Testament is obscure; and, though we see the abiding results of both, and the preparation made for the coming of the Lord, we know little in detail of what took place. One thing however is plain: God and His methods were unchanged. First came the call to the new Exodus; then the re-establishment of law and worship; and then the rebuilding of that commonwealth of Israel, through which in the fullness of time the world was to be blessed.

We consider first the prophetic word. By a prophet God had brought His people out of Egypt; and now, when the wheel had come full-circle, by a prophet, the "second Isaiah," He brought them out of Babylon. It is the second Isaiah who is the true "Evangelical prophet," repeating and expanding in words of marvel-

2 Kings 24⁸-
17

Jer. 42¹⁰ ff

Ezek. 20³²

Isa. 43¹⁶⁻²⁰

lous beauty the old promise to Abraham with a new insight into its meaning, reading the divine purpose of deliverance in the raising up of Cyrus, proclaiming the approaching vindication by the God of righteousness and salvation of His believing people, and telling them that their "hard service is accomplished," and once more they are to pass with God through the wilderness to the promised land. But the human response was as necessary as ever; and, if the beauty of the new prophecy seems to have been but the beauty of a dream, it was because the response was lacking, and Israel as a whole preferred the "flesh-pots" of Babylon to that way of the Cross which would have led to national resurrection. Even so the Israel which remained in Babylon did not cease to be Israel, nor did the Israel which in later centuries was widely scattered over the Græco-Roman world. Henceforward there are two Israels, one in Palestine and one of "the Dispersion"; and, when the Lord has come and the Spirit been given, the Church will be built upon the believing remnant of both. Meanwhile, each will have its own strength and its own weakness, and each its place in the fulfilment of the purpose of God.

Isa. 40²Isa. 41¹⁷⁻¹⁸Isa. 43²Zech. 4¹⁰Ezra 3^{2, 3}Ecclus. 50¹ ff

What then of Israel in Palestine? It is the "day of small things" at first, but one in no way to be "despised," as it was despised then, and is often despised still. The first task was the restoration of worship, of the daily sacrifice before aught else; then came the rebuilding of the temple and of the city wall. The first Joshua was a soldier, the second a high priest; and it is the high priests who will be the leaders of the reconstituted Israel, whether for weal or woe. Priests are much like other men; they may rise to the height of Simon, the son of Onias, or sink to the depth of Caiaphas; it is dangerous for a nation to be governed by one class. But it is better to be priest-ridden than to be soldier-

ridden or lawyer-ridden; and the rule of the high priests was perhaps the noblest period of Israel's history. Just for a moment it seemed that the monarchy would be revived in Zerubbabel, and that, as in the Holy Roman Empire, priest and king would wear their crowns together; just for a moment we find in Haggai and Zechariah a revival of prophecy. But it is priesthood which abides, with its emphasis upon law and worship; and wherever, as in Protestantism to-day, priesthood is misunderstood, the restored Israel is misunderstood with it.

Have then the prophets been forgotten? Not so. It is in the restored Israel that for the first time they come into their own; for the prophet has no success until he converts the priest. Not one of the greater prophets was successful in his lifetime; the call to be a prophet seemed by a sad irony to be a call to make men's heart fat and their eyes heavy, to close their eyes rather than to open them; as against prophecy corrupt tradition won every time. But, when the prophets are slain and their sepulchres built, their reign begins; for their word is remembered, and becomes a part of the traditional teaching. That is what we find in the restored Israel. The first temple had been a questionable blessing. It had been a Chapel Royal, quite as much associated with the pride and glitter of Solomon as with such religion as was his; his noble prayer is almost certainly of much later date. Who had been worshipped in the first temple, and what the worship had been, had depended upon the monarch of the hour; and very strange things are done in Chapels Royal. The second temple was far more glorious than the first, for it was the fruit of the labour and sacrifice of the poor. It was the temple of Jehovah alone; and its worship was a reformed worship, for which priest and prophet, and above all Ezekiel who was both, had

Zech. 3⁸, 6¹²Zech. 6⁹⁻¹⁵Isa. 6⁹, 10Zech. 1⁴⁻⁶,
7⁸⁻¹⁴2 Sam. 7⁴⁻⁷

Isa. 56⁷Ps. 65¹⁻⁴,
66¹³⁻¹⁵,
116¹²⁻¹⁹,
42¹⁻⁵, 63¹⁻²,
84, 122Zech. 4⁶, cf.
Hag. 2⁵ (R.V.
marg.)John 4²²
Ps. 51^{18, 19}Mark 11¹⁵⁻¹⁷Ezra 4²

worked together. Yet more, it was a house of prayer for all peoples, with the Psalter for its hymnal, and courts for teaching as well as for sacrifice. If anyone supposes that the worship of the second temple, in which our Lord took part, was but a material worship, let him read the psalms that were sung there. The Jews of post-exilic days loved the ordered worship of their temple when they were present, and pined for it when they were absent. The motto of its builders was "not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts"; as our Lord said, the Jews worshipped that which they knew, for the noble monotheism of the second Isaiah had been at last accepted. When God had built anew the walls of Jerusalem, He could delight in whole burnt-offering, for it was "the sacrifice of righteousness." The Christ when He came had no word to speak against the temple, though it was so soon to pass away. He cast out almost fiercely those who sold and bought there, and "would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through" it.

So also with the law. That passion for the law which grew up in the restored Israel was a noble passion; it inspired the most glorious struggle for freedom that the world has known. As the Christian Church was inspired to see, there is nothing in the Old Testament so worthy of daily repetition as the 119th Psalm, that great song of the law. No doubt, in after days the Scribes and Pharisees went badly astray. They missed the spirit of justice, mercy, and humility which inspired the Torah of Israel, and made it an occasion for self-satisfaction, pride, and cruelty; they substituted legalism for the obedience of faith and love. But Ezra and Nehemiah showed no such spirit. If they seem harsh and exclusive in their attitude to "those without," there was good reason for their action; had the new Israel been at first less exclusive, the old amalgamation with the world would

have occurred again. But there is more to be said than this. It was the restored Israel's reverence for the past, which preserved the old law and prophecy in the form in which they were best adapted to the restored Israel's needs; and our own indebtedness to it is here incalculable. Nor was prophecy altogether absent, though there was less need for it than of old. Far more than we generally recognize of the prophetic teaching as now we read it belongs to post-exilic days. Thus through the centuries till the coming of the Lord it was upon the Israel of Palestine that the religious future of the world mainly depended. Without its witness the Dispersion would have been lost in the heathen world.

But the Dispersion too had its place. Just because the Israel of the Dispersion was scattered among the Gentiles, it was a light to lighten them, as the Israel of Palestine could not be. The greatest fault of the Israel of Palestine was its bitter nationalism. Like the Britons of the sixth century and the Christians within the Turkish Empire, they had often suffered too much from "those without" to wish to evangelize them. Like Jonah they refused to go to Nineveh, not because they feared to go, but because they desired its destruction. With the Dispersion it was otherwise. Their relations with "those without" were more friendly; through the Septuagint they brought law and prophecy within reach of the Græco-Roman world; while owing to their wider outlook the thought of the Greeks, as the book of Wisdom shows, found a path by which it could pass to Israel and be fruitful there. It was the Dispersion which gave St. Paul and St. Barnabas to the Church, and which provided the bridge over which they passed to the evangelization of the Gentile world. The Israel of the Dispersion had a manifold origin. In its first beginning, its separation from the Israel of Palestine was one for which it was directly responsible, and the losses

which it suffered were grave. The religion of the individual does not grow stronger by the loss or lessening of his share in the corporate life and worship of the Church ; it tends to grow fanatical or to wither away. But here as ever God followed men on the path that they had chosen, and overruled their evil for good.

What then shall we say of our divided Christendom ? Though history repeats itself, there is no exactness in its repetition : and we must not press parallels farther than they will go. But does not Christendom to-day remind us not a little of Israel before the coming of the Lord ? On the one hand, there is the solid edifice of the Church in East and West, strong in its unbroken continuity with the past, its high-priestly government, its system of law and worship. On the other, there is the Protestant Dispersion ; and—somewhere between—bridge-churches like the Anglican, which partake of the strength and weakness of both divisions of the Israel of God. This Dispersion has arisen in many different ways, the Church itself being largely responsible. But the loss which the Dispersion suffers is great ; is it not time for its return ? In the West the difficulty lies in what the Roman Church has come to be. It underwent a reformation in the sixteenth century as valuable as our own. But, though much was changed, the practical polytheism remains ; and, far more serious, since it must be accepted as the polytheism need not be, the absolutism inherited from the pagan empire of Rome. The Roman Church has largely become a kingdom of the world. Not only is its morality injured by legalism, but its faith too ; what is called faith is often but the acceptance of statements at the word of command. It is hard to exaggerate what we may learn from Rome in self-sacrifice, in the discipline and training of the spiritual life, and in the practical handling of men. But more than this we cannot say. At the Roman door the new

knowledge of our time too often knocks in vain, and we cannot accept what we know to be untrue. Moreover, those who seem to us her most characteristic representatives remind us in their arrogance and self-satisfaction too much of the Pharisees of our Lord's day. If Rome is ever to recover her sisters, it will not be by her present "covenant": she must first discover that they are indeed sisters, and deal with them as such. Meanwhile, it is for us all to maintain our own witness, to translate the common faith into language which the world can understand, and assimilate all that is best in its knowledge and outlook. So we shall make our own contribution to the good which God has in store for us all.

Ezek. 16⁶¹⁻⁶³
cf. Philem.^{15,}
¹⁶

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW TESTAMENT

Heb. 11, 2

WE have considered in the Old Testament the relation of the Church to the Bible. But will it be the same when we pass to the New ? The Word of God has now become Incarnate : God has spoken to us in His Son. Moreover, the Spirit has been bestowed to be the perfect interpreter of the Lord's message. Now that that which is perfect is come, will not all that is imperfect be done away, not only in the message, but in the manner of its conveyance ? Now the difference we expect in large measure we find. The Church had still a great part to play ; but it could not deal with the teaching of the Lord and His Apostles as it dealt with the materials from which it had formed the Old Testament. The Church preserved the Old Testament without further effort to transform it ; and, when the books of the New Testament had acquired the same sacred character, it left them untouched. God's self-disclosure in the facts of redemption had now reached its term. The Bible, like the Church, had come of age ; and they could begin their new witness to the world together.

Thus we shall seldom need in the New Testament to distinguish what words once meant from what they came to mean, and the literary problems will be fewer and simpler. There are, however, two considerations that we must not forget.

John 16¹³

John 16²⁵

First, the Lord spoke before the gift of the Spirit was bestowed. Not only had He many things to say which His followers could not immediately bear ; but He often

spoke in dark sayings rather than told them plainly of the Father. Thus, though we should never attach to His words a meaning which we do not believe to have been present to His mind, we should not confine their meaning to what His original hearers would have grasped. The striking character of His sayings, the beauty and interest of His parables, enabled words to be remembered that had not been understood; and, when the Spirit had been given, their meaning was more fully revealed. The same is true of His "works": there was more in them than was at first understood, as the Fourth Gospel makes clear. Just as our Lord's parables are in their perfection miracles, so His miracles are parables; and in neither can we set a limit to the depth of teaching they contain. Thus, to take but one example, the beautiful interpretation of "the Good Samaritan," in which the traveller is Everyman and the Samaritan our Lord, is by no means lightly to be set aside.

Moreover, the meaning we attach to our Lord's words and actions must depend upon our view of His Person; the more adequate our view of the latter, the more adequate our view of the former. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Who can set a limit to the meaning of such words as these? There is a rest which the prophet bestows by His teaching; and a rest which the Christ bestows by His redemption; and a rest which God Incarnate bestows upon the soul that is made for God, and can find rest only in Him. Now this even "orthodox" critics sometimes forget. They seek to put preconceived views aside, and to study the Lord in a purely historical way. They prefer at the first stage of their inquiry to err, if at all, by excess of caution; they frankly face any doubts which are suggested about the authenticity of particular sayings and the reality of particular miracles; and they attach to our Lord's

words about Himself the lowest sense which they will bear. When, however, in spite of their caution, they have become convinced that the faith of the Church is justified, they ought to reconsider both their critical doubts and their minimizing interpretations; and this they do not always do.

But secondly, though literary problems are simpler in the New Testament, we cannot put them altogether aside. Our Lord's first hearers were Jews; and the Spirit left their literary methods practically unchanged. Though the New Testament is in some ways very unlike the Old, in some ways it is very like it.

Let us consider first the collection and arrangement of the books. Here, as the idea of a New Testament slowly dawned upon the Church, it had a work to do similar to that already done for the Old. It had to choose the books which were to form the Canon, and to arrange them in order. The Gospels are the foundation of the New Testament, as the Pentateuch of the Old. They are, like the Pentateuch, primarily the history of the divine redemption, as the space occupied by the Passion proves; though the new moral standards are no more forgotten than they are in the older story. Next come the Acts and the Apostolic Epistles, corresponding to the "Former" and the "Latter" Prophets. We find here the story of the new Israel, with all its encouragement and warning, and the inspired explanation and application of the redeeming acts related in the Gospels. All these writings the Church received with profound reverence, and formed its mind by their teaching. But beyond these we find, again as in the Old Testament, a collection of less authoritative books, whose boundaries were not immediately fixed. The Epistle of St. James reminds us of the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament, and the Apocalypse in its turn of Daniel, which the Jews never reckoned among the "Prophets."

Here the attitude of the Church was one of caution. Not only Clement and Hermas, but the Apocalypse of St. John, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and a few later Epistles, were kept waiting for a time in the ante-chamber of the New Testament; and not all the postulants made good their claim to a position within it. The chief determining factor was probably the Church's belief in the Apostolic authorship of the books. But none would have been accepted, unless the Church had believed that their teaching was consistent with that of the Apostles. The Epistle to the Hebrews would not have been received had it been held to contradict the parable of the Prodigal; or the Revelation of St. John had it been believed to support the "Jewish dotage" of the Millennium.

Heb. 6⁴⁻⁸

Rev. 20⁴⁻⁶

We consider, secondly, the ascription of books to writers who were not their authors. This with the Jews was a common literary device, probably adopted without wish to deceive. Who, when the books first appeared, could have supposed that Ecclesiastes or Wisdom was written by Solomon? The same device is almost certainly adopted in 2 Peter; and perhaps in a few other books of the New Testament. Again, when literary history seemed of no importance, Christians might as naturally as the Jews before them form books out of fragmentary writings of their venerated teachers, and perhaps combine other material with them. Not only do many hold that fragments of several Epistles are found in 2 Corinthians, and that Romans 16 does not belong to the book of which it now forms a chapter; but they hold that the Pastorals are only in parts the work of St. Paul. It is hard to exaggerate the authority of the New Testament; but we cannot say that it is all of equal authority.

Thirdly, we must understand the character of the historical books. The Lucan and Matthæan Gospels

are, like the Pentateuch, "Harmonies" compiled from earlier materials; and the same may be true of the earlier half of the Acts of the Apostles. Indeed, the Syrian Church, which had the closest contact with the Jews, for long read the story of the Lord in a Harmony formed from all our Gospels; and it would have been possible to analyse it much as we analyse the Pentateuch to-day. We do not find in the New Testament, as in the Old, contradictory views of the same incidents or characters; not only is the character of the Lord, the more we examine it, the more found to be one of perfect consistency, but the characters of the other actors in the story also. But we do find slight contradictions, and alternative accounts of the same sayings or incidents. Moreover, some would maintain that St. Luke and St. John follow the Old Testament in other ways. St. Luke is a literary artist who imitates not only Old Testament narrative, but Septuagint Greek; the change in style which takes place in the fifth verse of his Gospel is obvious even to an English reader. That he respected the words of the Lord we cannot doubt; but, in view of Old Testament precedents, would he have thought it illegitimate to adorn his narratives with Psalms ascribed to his characters, but composed by himself, or to provide speeches for the Apostles which but roughly correspond to their words? So with St. John. What is the real relation of the wonderful discourses of his Gospel to what the Lord actually said? Now, when such questions are asked, we must remember that the New Testament is immeasurably nearer to the facts which it relates than are the chief narratives of the Old. St. Luke had lived in the closest association with St. Paul, and would have known very well the character of St. Peter's early preaching; it is extremely unlikely that he has misrepresented either. There is no real parallel between the sermons of the Acts and those of Deuteronomy and

the Chronicler. Still less can we believe that the discourses of the Fourth Gospel are but free compositions of the Evangelist; that would be to set the disciple above his Master, and the servant above his Lord. The wording and the arrangement may be those of the Evangelist, as he thinks of the needs of those for whom he writes; but the teaching is the teaching of the Lord. It may be that the Evangelist is like the mission preacher who says, "Jesus says to you to-night"; and then joins in one what the Lord did say, and through His Spirit is saying still, and what he knows that the Lord would say if He had the preacher's audience before Him; we cannot in the Fourth Gospel separate the words of the Lord from the Evangelist's explanation and commentary. But, as has been well said, "the meaning of the Bible is the Bible"; and we draw closer to the Lord in the inspired explanation of His teaching that we should in His actual words less perfectly understand. Hardly ever do the Apostles in their Epistles quote the exact words of the Lord, though often His words may lie behind what they say.

We see then that since the Lord has come, and His Spirit been given, the old difficulties in understanding the Word of God have largely passed away; and the two great witnesses, the Bible and the Church, have a clearer and fuller message to bear. But not even now can either stand alone; and our final inquiry must be into the relation to the Word of God both of the Lord as He speaks in the Bible and of the Lord as He speaks in the Church.

What is the relation of the Lord, God's final messenger, to that Word of God which He brings? Is it simply the old relation of the prophet to his message, or is it one far deeper? Certainly the Lord was a prophet, and it was as a prophet that He first claimed to be received. The great body of His followers do not till His death

Luke 7¹⁶,
24¹⁹⁻²¹

seem to have regarded Him in any other way ; though they may have regarded Him as a redeeming prophet, like Samuel and Moses himself. But the Evangelists have passed beyond this. To St. John the relation of the Lord to the Word of God is one of identity. The Lord is Himself the Word of God who is one with the Father, and through whom the world was made and has been redeemed. Nor do the Synoptists regard Him differently. To the Baptist the Word of God " comes " in the wilderness, as it came to Elijah of old. Its action is intermittent, as it was with all the prophets ; and, when the divine fire is not burning within the Baptist, he can doubt his message, as Jeremiah did, and send to the Lord for its confirmation. But the Synoptists never speak of the Word of God as coming to the Lord. It never comes to Him, because it is never absent from Him. In Him God is always speaking ; His word is the Father's word, and the Father's His. It has often been noticed that, while the prophets use the formula, " Thus saith Jehovah," the Lord's language is, " Verily, verily, I say unto you." It is not that He claims an authority which the prophets did not claim, for higher authority than that of God there cannot be. Nor is it that He claims an authority in word or work which is distinct from the Father's ; such a claim He repudiates again and again. It is that while the prophets of the Old Testament know the difference between speaking in their own name and speaking in God's, since they sometimes do the one and sometimes the other, our Lord knows no such difference. The most completely personal expression which He can give to the truth is the exact expression of the Father's mind.

Moreover, the Lord's relation to His work is the same as His relation to His word, and quite different from that of the prophets. In one sense He has no initiative. " The Son can do nothing of Himself, but

John 1¹⁻⁴Luke 3²Matt. 11^{2, 3}
Jer. 20^{7, 9}John 14²⁴John 5^{19, 20}
10John 5^{19, 20}

what He seeth the Father doing." But the will of the Son is none the less a true and ardent personal will; John 5²⁶ if it is an apparent contradiction to say that the Father *gave* to the Son to have life *in Himself*, the contradiction is apparent only. The Son is no mere tool or instrument; nor is He just a servant fulfilling a purpose which is not His own. It is He Himself who says, "I will; be thou clean"; "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise"; Mark 14¹, Luke 7⁴¹, Mark 4³⁹ "Peace, be still." The Word or Wisdom of God, as cf. Luke 11⁴⁹ always in the Old Testament, is not only a Teacher but a Doer; and it is in action even more than in speech that His revelation is given.

To this teaching then we turn; and first to the Word of God as spoken to the Galilean crowds. Was it different in character from that spoken to Abraham, or to that spoken by Moses, and by the second Isaiah? The Evangelists tell us little of the Lord's preaching of the kingdom, since its character was already known by those for whom they wrote. But all that they tell us—the Lord's sermon at Nazareth is a crucial example—proves that Luke 4¹⁷⁻²⁷ His gospel was still the old gospel of the prophets, though proclaimed with a beauty, scope, and power unknown before. It was an offer of national redemption, a call to Israel to become under the Lord's leadership Israel indeed, a people under the direct rule of God and enjoying the fullness of His blessing; and the Lord's healing activity proved God's power to redeem by the beginning made in redemption. No doubt our Lord "knew what was in man," and had no illusions as to John 2²⁵ how His call would be received; in this He resembled the first Isaiah rather than the second. Even at Nazareth we can recognize the undertones of sorrow as well as the melody of "the words of grace," and the hope that looks beyond Israel to the Gentile world. But the offer was to the whole nation. If the Lord did not gather the whole, not a remnant only, as chickens under His wing—Matt. 23³⁷

Matt. 21⁴³Jer. 13¹¹,cf. Am. 9^{11, 12}
as quoted in
Acts 15¹⁶⁻¹⁸
Matt. 22⁵

if the kingdom of God was taken from Israel and given to a wider nation bringing forth the fruits thereof—it was no fault of His. Israel might yet have been to God “for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory,” and a missionary people by the fact of being so: but “they would not hear.” Like the exiles in Babylon, they preferred their farms and their merchandise, and prayed to be excused. Thus the Lord, like other prophets, had to fix His hopes upon the few rather than upon the many; and, when the Church was rebuilt upon the “remnant” of believing men, the greater part of the old Israel found itself outside.

Mark 10³²John 13³⁶Mark 8³⁵

Thus far the Lord acted as a prophet; but he was more than this. Unlike the prophets who went before Him, He was Himself the Word of God; and embodied in His own experience the gospel of glory through sacrifice which He proclaimed. Abraham and his company, Moses and his people, went forth together; and the Lord and a believing Israel might have done the same. But as things were, this could not be. How profound is the parable contained in the words of the earliest gospel! “They were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid.” Whither the Lord went, the Church could not follow Him yet, though it would follow Him afterwards. The doctrine of the Cross—“whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel’s shall save it”—was a difficult doctrine; it could be accepted only when the Lord could be seen to have sacrificed His own life, and received it again in a new and higher form. But long before this we can see that the Lord was Himself the Word that He proclaimed. If like Abraham, Moses, and the second Isaiah, He called men to leave their homes, it was because He Himself had left His own, and they could

not be of His company unless they followed Him. If He proclaimed the blessedness of the Kingdom or rule of God, He displayed that rule accepted by Himself, and proving itself a fount of blessing to men. In Him the kingdom was already "in the midst of" them; and, just in so far as men identified themselves with Him, they were already members of the kingdom.

Matt. 12²⁸,
Lukel7²¹
(R.V. marg.)
Luke 16¹⁶

But that was not all. The Word of God is His creating and redeeming power; and the Lord showed Himself to be this. In Him the prophet passed into the Christ, and the Christ into the Servant of Jehovah of whom the second Isaiah had spoken. The thoughts of the Jews had been full of illusion about their expected Christ, and the Lord dared not accept the title until something of His true character and methods were known. But, in thinking of the Christ as the corporate redeemer of the people of God, the Jews had been right, and the Lord could accept the title in His own sense. Only, the new life of the kingdom could not reach the fullness of its power, unless, as the story of Isaac had shown, it first passed through death; and just as the prophet could not be a redeeming prophet unless He was also the Christ, so the Christ could not be the redeeming Christ unless He died for His people, and prolonged His days that the purpose of God might prosper in His hand. How otherwise should He "see his seed"? For "except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone"; and the loneliness of Jesus would never have passed away, unless the Cross had come. "Art not thou the Christ? Save thyself and us." Yes! that was the Christ's work. It was by saving Himself that He saved all His members till the end of time; though the only way of saving Himself was by hating His life in this world "to keep it unto life eternal." The gospel in its final form includes the proclamation of the Lord as the Christ and the Saviour

Isa. 53¹⁰

John 12²⁴

Luke 23³⁹

John 12²⁵

of the world; and this gospel too the Lord Himself is. He proclaims Himself to be the Creator and Redeemer and Head of the Church by actually re-creating, redeeming, and ruling over it; He proclaims Himself to be the Saviour of the world by the saving power which He exercises over all who receive Him.

John 1¹²

And may we not go further still? The conception of the kingdom had been gradually changed in the centuries after the exile. At first all that had been expected was a purified and redeemed Israel which would be to God for a praise and for a glory. But later a higher hope had dawned, the hope of a new heaven and earth. It was not easy to unite the two conceptions; and some expected both to be realized, the earthly kingdom of the "Millennium" first, and the heavenly kingdom afterwards. In the Word of God as spoken and lived by the Lord both were united. In Him and His little company the earthly kingdom was already partially realized; but that was not all. The world-transforming power was seen in the Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord; and the change which took place in Him was the promise of a similar change for all His members, and at last for the world. The kingdom, and the life eternal begin here; but they do not end here. The present kingdom is but the foretaste of that "regeneration" which will include the transformation of the world itself.

Isa. 65¹⁷

Eph. 1¹⁹⁻²³,
2⁴⁻⁶

Rom. 8²⁰⁻²⁵

Matt. 19²⁸

We have passed here beyond what is clearly revealed by our Lord's words; but not beyond the implications of His experience, or the interpretation of it which His Apostles were inspired to give. The Lord and the Spirit are one; and just as the Old Testament history cannot be understood without the explanation given by the "Former" and "Latter" Prophets, so the Gospel history cannot be understood without the explanation given of it in the Acts and the Epistles. If the inspira-

tion of the Apostles is a greater thing than that of the prophets, it is because the facts whose meaning they are inspired to see are greater and more revealing facts. Inspiration waits upon revelation; and the inspiration sufficient for the interpretation of "earthly things" John 3^{11, 12} is not sufficient for the interpretation of "heavenly things."

Nor is this relation between the Epistles and the Gospels confined to the explanation of the Gospel message; it is found also in the inculcation of Christian morality and in the development of institutional life. The moral teaching of the Lord, though it contains much which is of value even for those who do not accept His Gospel, is not really separable from the Gospel itself. Like the law of Moses, it is moral teaching for a redeemed people, and hardly practicable until redemption has been accomplished; when St. Paul and St. John base their moral teaching upon the fact of redemption, they are expounding a morality partly new. So too with their teaching about the Church. Our Lord in the Gospels naturally says little about the Church. It had been in existence for over a thousand years, and its character and principles were known; and, though it would be a very different Church after the gift of the Spirit, it would be for the Spirit to guide it then. But, just as He says enough about His redeeming work to make it clear that the Apostolic Gospel possesses His authority, so He says enough about the Church's institutional life, about the sacraments and the ministry, to convince us that here too the Apostles have rightly interpreted His mind. The New Testament is a whole in which Gospels, Epistles, and Acts are all necessary one to another. If it is not all the Word of God in the same sense, it is all necessary to our understanding of its meaning, and so to its being the Word of God to ourselves.

So then the Lord, as He speaks to us through the Bible, is not merely the minister or prophet of the Word, but the Word itself, the most complete revelation of the mind and purpose of God that we are here able to receive. When He promises that the Spirit will lead the Apostles into all the truth, it is of the truth contained in His teaching, His Person, and His experience that He is speaking. The words are part of the discourse in which He claims to be Himself the truth, and we must not extend their application further than the context allows. There are, for example, many questions about the world unseen and the life beyond the grave which we should like to have answered; and Jews and Christians alike have speculated about them. But if the Lord does not supply the answers, neither has the Church authority to do so. The Spirit that dwells in her never speaks "from Himself," or adds to the Lord's message; He but brings to our remembrance what the Lord has said, glorifies the Lord, and declares to us the meaning of the experience through which He passed.

John 16¹³John 14²⁶John 16¹³⁻¹⁵

But it is not only in the Bible that the Lord speaks to us the Word of God. Just in so far as, dwelling in the Church by the Spirit, He makes it His Body, the Church also is the Word of God to men; and, as he that has seen the Lord has seen the Father, so he that has seen the Church should have seen the Lord. "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me." It is a unity of life in the one case as in the other; and, just as the Father abiding in the Lord reveals Himself through the works which by the Lord He does, so the Lord abiding in the Church reveals Himself through the works which He does by the Church. If the Church were as responsive to the Lord as the Lord to the Father, it would be the Word of God to the world far

John 6⁵⁷John 14¹⁰

more effectively than the Bible can be ; and, if it is far from being so to-day, we must set the true ideal before our eyes, and work for its recovery.

First then, the Church should have a life as distinct from the world's as was the life of the Lord Himself. A Church which is confused with the world cannot effectively witness. It may be called, like Joseph of old, for the world's sake to a close association with it. But the association will never be too close if the Church maintains its moral standards ; the world will see to that.

Secondly, like the Lord again, the Church must have a Gospel to preach and a work to do, which are not its own in one sense, but are its own in another. In its relation to the Lord it must reproduce the old paradox of His relation to the Father. Just as the Lord, while doing nothing " of Himself," none the less does His own will in doing the Father's, so the Church, while doing nothing of itself, should do its own will in doing the Lord's. " Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you." There lies the paradox. In the ordinary relations of man with man, the slave can never be a friend, or the friend a slave. But in the Church it is otherwise. Though the members of Christ may not do what they like, they may like what they do. To preach and to live the Gospel, and so to be the Word of God to the World, should be the one thing for which they not only live but desire to live. " We," says St. Paul, have " the mind of Christ " : in doing Christ's will, we do our own. John 15¹⁴
1 Cor, 2¹⁶

Lastly, this living as well as preaching of the Gospel means for the Church not only a life of holiness and service, like the Lord's life here ; but in the long run a sacrificial life, which preaches the Gospel of glory through sacrifice in act as well as in word. In Greek, the words for " witness " and for " martyr " are identical ; and,

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2 Cor. 4^{10, 12}

as the Apocalypse teaches, a witnessing Church will be a martyr Church. That is St. Paul's way. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. . . . So then death worketh in us, but life in you." The sacrifice of the Church means the life of the world. Just as the Lord could only send the Spirit when He had been crucified and glorified, so the Church can only minister it, as it shares even now the Cross, and the Resurrection which follows it.

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